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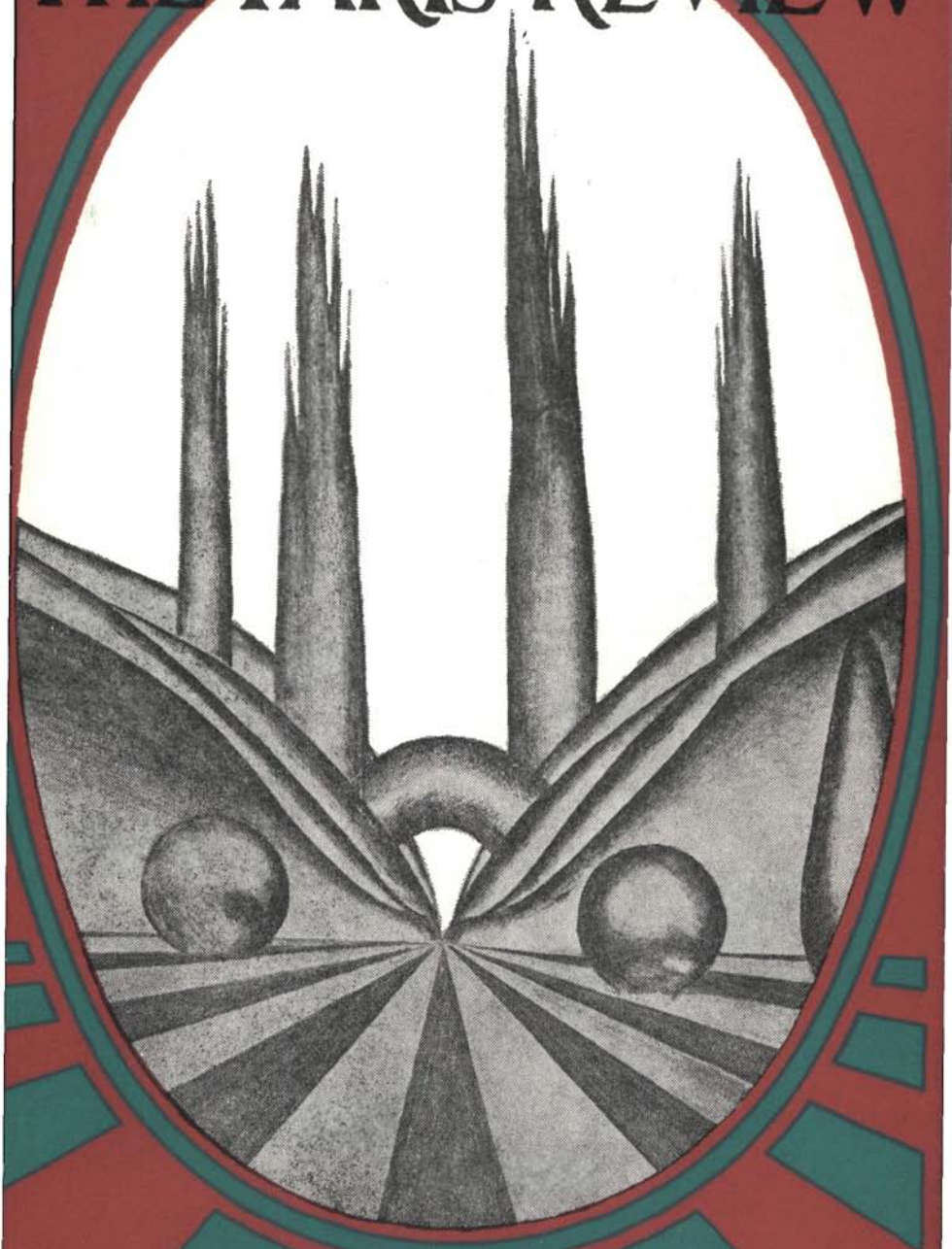

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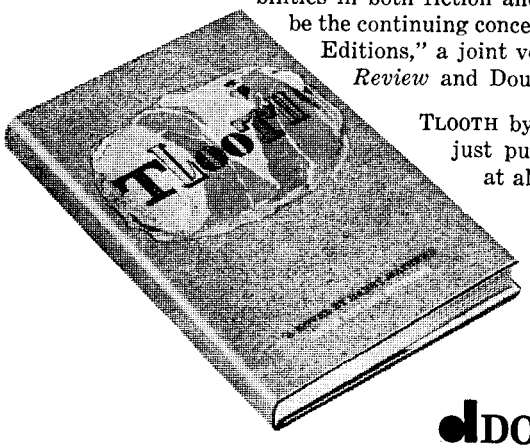

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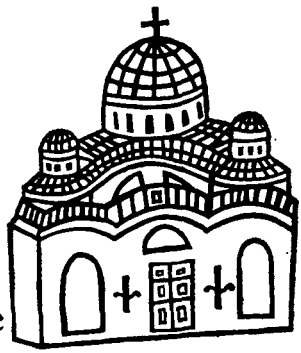

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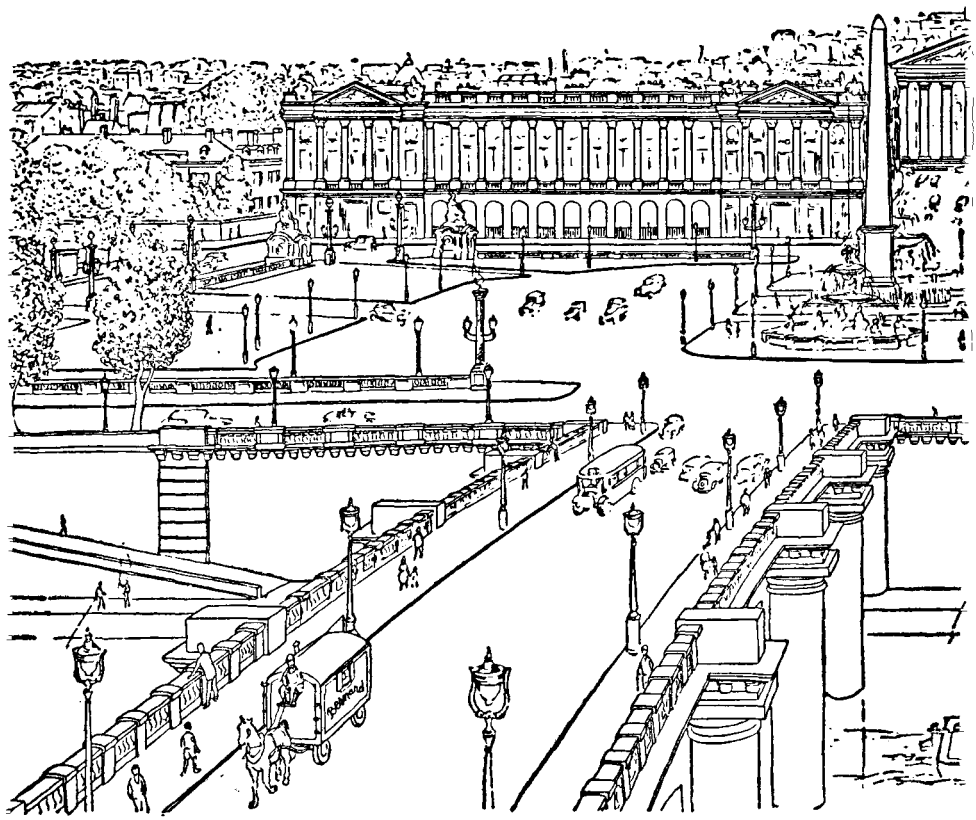

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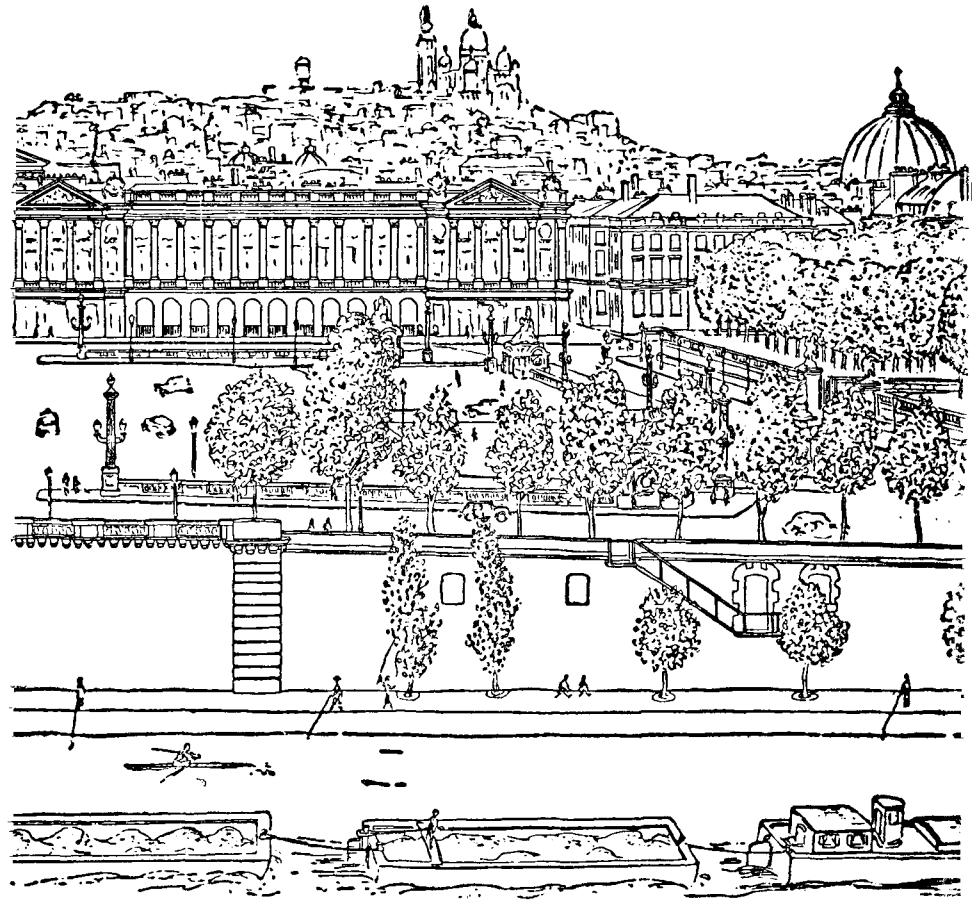

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Martial Raysse — *Tableau dans le style français II*

Cover by Colin Self
Frontispiece by William Pene du Bois
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I'll chop your spine off

F. - I'~~ll knock your nut off, sonny Jim. My word of honour.~~ I'~~ll have you for catsmeat.~~ you talk to me like that, son. Talking to your filthy louzy father like that.

3. - You know what, youre getting demented.

p.

What do you think of Second Wind in the fourth race ?

F. - Second Wind ? What race ?

3. - The fourth.

F. - Dont stand a chance.

3. - Sure he does.

F. - Not a chance.

3. - Thats all you know.

p

F. - He talks to me about horses.

p.

3. - ~~I'll tell you one thing, its about time you learned to coo~~

F. - ~~Yes ?~~

3. - ~~Thxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ I want to ask you something. That dinner we had before, whats the name of it ? What do you call it ?

p.

Why dont you buy a dog ? Youre a dog cook. Homest. You think youre cooking for a lot of dogs.

F. - If you dont like it get out.

3. - I am going out. I'm going out to buy myself a proper dinner.

Choke. Suffocate.

F. - ~~Go. Go.~~ Leave me alone.

3. - Yes, but I'm not going until I decide the exact moment I want to go, you see. ~~You dont tell me to do anything, Dad.~~ I go when I like, I come back when I like. ~~You wouldnt be here only because of me. Whose money keeps you here ? If it wasnt for me and Joey xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx you know where youd be ? Who gives you the monet to do the cooking !~~ Get it? You don't even come into it.

F. - Its my house.

3. - Dont make me laugh. You're dead if I say so.

F. - ~~Yes ? xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

3. - ~~Joey ? You dont think so.~~ F. Get burnt. ~~Burn.~~ Born gets up.

Here, Daddy, you going to use your stick on me ? Dont use your stick on me, Daddy. I havent done nothing wrong. Dont clout me with that stick Dad.

I know what you do every night. silence. 3. wraps his paper, puts it in his pocket. ~~Dear. Joey comes in. Uncle Sam. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~

I know all about stinking filthy tykes!

Eh, Dad, I forgot. One thing. Been meaning to ask you. That night ... that night you .. got me .. with mum ... what was it like ? When I was just a glint in your naughty old eye. ~~Are you had me in mind, did you ?~~

You know all about tykes.

F. - ~~Cut yourself to pieces.~~ Stuff your face ~~into~~ glass ~~xxxxx~~ Into ~~broken~~ glass.

F - Drown in your own bastard blood.

Shove it into a plate of glass.

Is ~~that~~ it a fact that you had me in mind Or is it a fact that I was the last thing you had in mind.

Manuscript page from *The Homecoming*.

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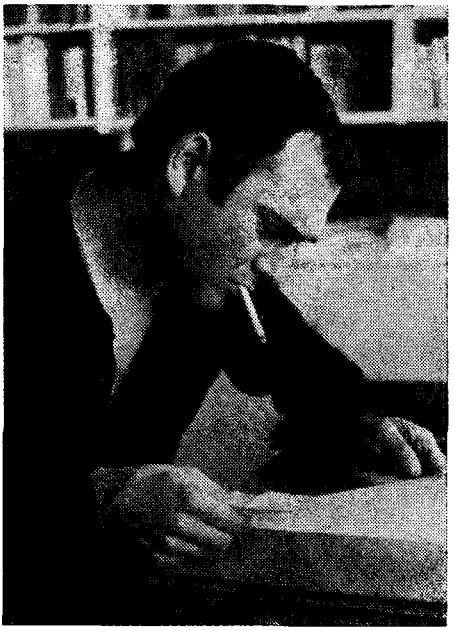
Harold Pinter

An Interview



Harold Pinter recently moved into a five-storey 1820 Nash house facing Regent's Park in London. The view from the floor-through top floor where he has installed his office overlooks a duck pond and a long stretch of wooded parkland; his desk faces this view, and in late October, when the interview took place, the changing leaves and the hazy London sun constantly distracted him as he thought over questions or began to give answers. He speaks in a deep, theater-trained voice which comes rather surprisingly from him, and indeed is the most remarkable thing about him physically. When speaking he almost always tends to excessive qualification of any statement, as if coming to a final definition of things were obviously impossible. One gets the impression—as one does with many of the characters in his plays—of a man so deeply involved with what he's thinking that roughing it into speech is a painful necessity.

He was not working at any writing projects when the interview took place, and questions about his involuntary idleness (many

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questions came back to it without meaning to) were particularly uncomfortable for him. His own work is alternatively a source of mystery, amusement, joy, and anger to him; in looking it over he often discovered possibilities and ambiguities which he'd not noticed or forgotten. One felt that if only he'd rip out his telephone and hang black curtains across the wide windows he'd be much happier; though he insists that the "great boredom one has with oneself" is unrelated to his environment or his obligations.

When he wrote his first plays, in 1957, he was homeless, constantly on tour as an actor with a repertory stage company, playing all sorts of parts in obscure seaside resorts and provincial cities. His wife, the actress Vivien Merchant, toured with him, but when she became pregnant in 1958 it was necessary for them to find a home, and they took a basement room in London's shabby Notting Hill Gate section, in a building where Mr. Pinter worked as a caretaker to pay his rent. When their son was born they borrowed enough money to move to a less shabby district in Chiswick, but both had to return to full-time acting when Mr. Pinter's first full-length play, The Birthday Party, *was a full-scale flop in 1958. The production of* The Caretaker *in 1960 produced enough money for a move to the middle-class district of Kew, and then, thinking he could live on his writings, Mr. Pinter moved his family to a bow-fronted Regency house in the south coast seaside town of Worthing. But the two-hour drive to London became imperative too often, and so they moved once again, to a rented flat in Kensington, until Mr. Pinter's lucrative film scripts made it possible for them to buy the Regent's Park house. Though it is not yet completely renovated, the size and comfort of it are impressive, as is Mr. Pinter's office, with a separate room nearby for his secretary and a small bar equally nearby for the beer and scotch which he drinks steadily during the day, whether working or not. Bookshelves line one half the area, and a velvet chaise longue faces the small rear garden. On the walls are a series of Feliks Topolski sketches of London theater scenes; a poster of the Montevideo production of* El Cuidador; *a small financial balance sheet indicating that his first West End production,* The Homecoming, *earned 260 pounds in its disastrous week's run; a Picasso drawing; and his citation when he was named to the Order of the British Empire last spring. "The year* after *the Beatles," he emphasizes.*

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INTERVIEWER

When did you start writing plays, and why?

PINTER

My first play was *The Room*, written when I was twenty-seven. A friend of mine called Henry Woolf was a student in the drama department at Bristol University at the time when it was the only drama department in the country. He had the opportunity to direct a play, and as he was my oldest friend he knew I'd been writing, and he knew I had an idea for a play, though I hadn't written any of it. I was acting in Rep at the time, and he told me he had to have the play the next week to meet his schedule. I said this was ridiculous, he might get it in six months. And then I wrote it in four days.

INTERVIEWER

Has writing always been so easy for you?

PINTER

Well, I had been writing for years, hundreds of poems and short pieces of prose. About a dozen had been published in little magazines. I wrote a novel as well; it's not good enough to be published, really, and never has been. After I wrote *The Room*, which I didn't see performed for a few weeks, I started to work immediately on *The Birthday Party*.

INTERVIEWER

What led you to do that so quickly?

PINTER

It was the process of writing a play which had started me going. Then I went to see *The Room*, which was a remarkable experience. Since I'd never written a play before, I'd of course never seen one of mine performed, never had an audience sitting there. The only people who'd ever seen what I'd written had been a few friends and my wife. So to sit in the audience—well, I wanted to piss very badly throughout the whole thing, and at the end I dashed out behind the bicycle shed...

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INTERVIEWER

What other effect did contact with an audience have on you?

PINTER

I was very encouraged by the response of that university audience, though no matter what the response had been I would have written *The Birthday Party*, I know that. Watching first nights, though I've seen quite a few by now, is never any better. It's a nerve-wracking experience. It's not a question of whether the play goes well or badly. It's not the audience reaction, it's *my* reaction. I'm rather hostile toward audiences—I don't much care for large bodies of people collected together. Everyone knows that audiences vary enormously, it's a mistake to care too much about them. The thing one should be concerned with is whether the performance has expressed what one set out to express in writing the play. It sometimes does.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think that without the impetus provided by your friend at Bristol you would have gotten down to writing plays?

PINTER

Yes, I think I was going to write *The Room*. I just wrote it a bit quicker under the circumstances, he just triggered something off. *The Birthday Party* had also been in my mind for a long time. It was sparked off from a very distinct situation in digs when I was on tour. In fact the other day a friend of mine gave me a letter I wrote to him in nineteen-fifty something, Christ knows when it was. This is what it says, "I have filthy insane digs, a great bulging scrag of a woman with breasts rolling at her belly, an obscene household, cats, dogs, filth, tea-strainers, mess, oh bullocks, talk, chat rubbish shit scratch dung poison, infantility, deficient order in the upper fretwork, fucking roll on..." Now the thing about this is *that* was *The Birthday Party*—I was in those digs, and this woman

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was Meg in the play, and there was a fellow staying there in Eastbourne, on the coast. The whole thing remained with me, and three years later I wrote the play.

INTERVIEWER

Why wasn't there a character representing you in the play?

PINTER

I had—I have—nothing to say about myself, directly. I wouldn't know where to begin. Particularly since I often look at myself in the mirror and say, "Who the hell's that?"

INTERVIEWER

And you don't think being represented as a character on stage would help you find out?

PINTER

No.

INTERVIEWER

Have your plays usually been drawn from situations you've been in? *The Caretaker*, for example.

PINTER

I'd met a few, quite a few, tramps—you know, just in the normal course of events, and I think there was one particular one... I didn't know him very well, he did most of the talking when I saw him. I bumped into him a few times, and about a year or so afterward he sparked this thing off...

INTERVIEWER

Had it occurred to you to act in *The Room?*

PINTER

No, no—the acting was a separate activity altogether. Though I wrote *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, and *The Dumb Waiter* in 1957, I was acting all the time in a repertory company, doing all kinds of jobs, traveling to Bournemouth

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and Torquay and Birmingham. I finished *The Birthday Party* while I was touring in some kind of farce, I don't remember the name.

INTERVIEWER

As an actor, do you find yourself with a compelling sense of how roles in your plays should be performed?

PINTER

Quite often I have a compelling sense of how a role should be played. And I'm proved—equally as often—quite wrong.

INTERVIEWER

Do you see yourself in each role as you write? And does your acting help you as a playwright?

PINTER

I read them all aloud to myself while writing. But I don't see myself in each role—I couldn't play most of them. My acting doesn't impede my playwrighting because of these limitations. For example, I'd like to write a play—I've frequently thought of this—entirely about women.

INTERVIEWER

Your wife, Vivien Merchant, frequently appears in your plays. Do you write parts for her?

PINTER

No. I've never written any part for any actor, and the same applies to my wife. I just think she's a very good actress and a very interesting actress to work with, and I want her in my plays.

INTERVIEWER

Acting was your profession when you first started to write plays?

PINTER

Oh, yes, it was all I ever did. I didn't go to university. I left school at sixteen—I was fed up and restless. The only thing

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that interested me at school was English language and literature, but I didn't have Latin and so couldn't go on to university. So I went to a few drama schools, not studying seriously; I was mostly in love at the time and tied up with that.

INTERVIEWER

Were the drama schools of any use to you as a playwright?

PINTER

None whatsoever. It was just living.

INTERVIEWER

Did you go to a lot of plays in your youth?

PINTER

No, very few. The only person I really liked to see was Donald Wolfit in a Shakespearean Company at the time. I admired him tremendously; his Lear is still the best I've ever seen. And then I was reading, for years, a great deal of modern literature, mostly novels.

INTERVIEWER

No playwrights—Brecht, Pirandello...

PINTER

Oh certainly not, not for years. I read Hemingway, Dostoevski, Joyce and Henry Miller at a very early age, and Kafka. I'd read Beckett's novels, too, but I'd never heard of Ionesco until after I'd written the first few plays.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think these writers had any influence on your writing?

PINTER

I've been influenced *personally* by everyone I've ever read—and I read all the time—but none of these writers particularly

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influenced my writing. Beckett and Kafka stayed with me the most—I think Beckett is the best prose writer living. My world is still bound up by other writers—that's one of the best things in it.

INTERVIEWER

Has music influenced your writing, do you think?

PINTER

I don't know how music can influence writing; but it has been very important for me, both jazz and classical music. I feel a sense of music continually in writing, which is a different matter from having been influenced by it. Boulez and Webern are now composers I listen to a great deal.

INTERVIEWER

Do you get impatient with the limitations of writing for the theater?

PINTER

No. It's quite different; the theater's much the most difficult kind of writing for me, the most naked kind, you're so entirely restricted. I've done some film work, but for some reason or other I haven't found it very easy to satisfy myself on an original idea for a film. *Tea Party*, which I did for television, is actually a film, cinematic, I wrote it like that. Television and films are simpler than the theater—if you get tired of a scene you just drop it and go on to another one. (I'm exaggerating, of course.) What *is* so different about the stage is that you're just *there*, stuck—there are your characters stuck on the stage, you've got to live with them and deal with them. I'm not a very inventive writer in the sense of using the technical devices other playwrights do—look at Brecht! I can't use the stage the way he does, I just haven't got that kind of imagination, so I find myself stuck with these characters who are either sitting or standing, and they've either got to walk out of a door, or come in through a door, and that's about all they can do.

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INTERVIEWER

And talk.

PINTER

Or keep silent.

INTERVIEWER

After *The Room*, what effect did the production of your next plays have on your writing?

PINTER

The Birthday Party was put on at the Lyric, Hammersmith in London. It went on a little tour of Oxford and Cambridge first, and was very successful. When it came to London it was completely massacred by the critics—absolutely slaughtered. I've never really known why, nor am I particularly interested. It ran a week. I've framed the statement of the box office takings: 260 pounds, including a first night of 140 pounds and the Thursday matinée of two pounds, nine shillings—there were six people there. I was completely new to writing for the professional theater, and it was rather a shock when it happened. But I went on writing—the BBC were very helpful. I wrote *A Slight Ache* on commission from them. In 1960 *The Dumb Waiter* was produced, and then *The Caretaker*. The only really bad experience I've had was *The Birthday Party;* I was so green and gauche—not that I'm rosy and confident now, but comparatively... Anyway, for things like stage design I didn't know how to cope, and I didn't know how to talk to the director.

INTERVIEWER

What was the effect of this adversity on you? How was it different from unfavorable criticism of your acting, which surely you'd had before?

PINTER

It was a great shock, and I was very depressed for about forty-eight hours. It was my wife, actually, who said just

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that to me, "You've had bad notices before," etc. There's no question but that her common sense and practical help got me over that depression, and I've never felt anything like that again.

INTERVIEWER

You've directed several of your plays. Will you continue to do so?

PINTER

No. I've come to think it's a mistake. I work much as I write, just moving from one thing to another to see what's going to happen next. One tries to get the thing... *true*. But I rarely get it. I think I'm more useful as the author closely involved with a play: as a director I think I tend to inhibit the actors, because however objective I am about the text and try not to insist that *this is what's meant*, I think there is an obligation on the actors too heavy to bear.

INTERVIEWER

Since you are an actor, do actors in your plays ever approach you and ask you to change lines or aspects of their roles?

PINTER

Sometimes, quite rarely, lines are changed when we're working together. I don't at all believe in the anarchic theater of so-called "creative" actors—the actors can do that in someone else's plays. Which wouldn't, however, at all affect their ability to play in mine.

INTERVIEWER

Which of your plays did you first direct?

PINTER

I co-directed *The Collection* with Peter Hall. And then I directed *The Lover* and *The Dwarfs* on the same bill at the Arts. *The Lover* didn't stand much of a chance because it was my

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decision, regretted by everyone—except me—to do *The Dwarfs*, which is apparently the most intractable, impossible piece of work. Apparently ninety-nine people out of a hundred feel it's a waste of time, and the audience hated it.

INTERVIEWER

It seems the densest of your plays in the sense that there's quite a bit of talk and very little action. Did this represent an experiment for you?

PINTER

No. The fact is that *The Dwarfs* came from my unpublished novel, which was written a long time ago. I took a great deal from it, particularly the kind of state of mind that the characters were in.

INTERVIEWER

So this circumstance of composition is not likely to be repeated?

PINTER

No. I should add that even though it is, as you say, more dense, it had great value, great interest for me. From my point of view, the general delirium and states of mind and reactions and relationships in the play—although terribly sparse—are clear to me. I know all the things that aren't said, and the way the characters actually look at each other, and what they mean by looking at each other. It's a play about betrayal and distrust. It does seem very confusing and obviously it can't be successful. But it was good for me to do.

INTERVIEWER

Is there more than one way to direct your plays successfully?

PINTER

Oh, yes, but always around the same central truth of the play—if that's distorted, then it's bad. The main difference in

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interpretation comes from the actors. The director can certainly be responsible for a disaster, too—the first performance of *The Caretaker* in Germany was heavy and posturized. There's no blueprint for any play, and several have been done entirely successfully without me helping in the production at all.

INTERVIEWER

When you are working on one, what is the key to a good writer-director relationship?

PINTER

What is absolutely essential is avoiding all defensiveness between author and director. It's a matter of mutual trust and openness. If that isn't there, it's just a waste of time.

INTERVIEWER

Peter Hall, who has directed many of your plays, says that they rely on precise verbal form and rhythm, and when you write "pause" it means something other than "silence," and three dots are different from a full stop. Is his sensitivity to this kind of writing responsible for your working well together?

PINTER

Yes, it is, very much so. I do pay great attention to those points you just mentioned. Hall once held a dot and pause rehearsal for the actors in *The Homecoming*. Although it sounds bloody pretentious it was apparently very valuable.

INTERVIEWER

Do you outline plays before you start to write them?

PINTER

Not at all. I don't know what kind of characters my plays will have until they... well, until they *are*. Until they indicate to me what they are. I don't conceptualize in any way. Once I've got the clues I follow them—that's my job, really, to follow the clues.

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INTERVIEWER

What do you mean by clues? Can you remember how one of your plays developed in your mind—or was it a line by line progression?

PINTER

Of course I can't remember exactly how a given play developed in my mind. I think what happens is that I write in a very high state of excitement and frustration. I follow what I see on the paper in front of me—one sentence after another. That doesn't mean I don't have a dim, possible overall idea—the image that starts off doesn't just engender what happens immediately, it engenders the possibility of an overall happening, which carries me through. I've got an idea of what *might* happen—sometimes I'm absolutely right, but on many occasions I've been proved wrong by what does actually happen. Sometimes I'm going along and I find myself writing "C. comes in" when I didn't know that he was going to come in; he *had* to come in at that point, that's all.

INTERVIEWER

In *The Homecoming*, Sam, a character who hasn't been very active for a while, suddenly cries out and collapses several minutes from the end of the play. Is this an example of what you mean? It seems abrupt.

PINTER

It suddenly seemed to me right. It just came. I knew he'd have to say something at one time in this section and this is what happened, that's what he said.

INTERVIEWER

Might characters therefore develop beyond your control of them, changing your idea—even if it's a vague idea—of what the play's about?

PINTER

I'm ultimately holding the ropes, so they never get too far away.

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INTERVIEWER

Do you sense when you should bring down the curtain, or do you work the text consciously toward a moment you've already determined?

PINTER

It's pure instinct. The curtain comes down when the rhythm seems right—when the action calls for a finish. I'm very fond of curtain lines, of doing them properly.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel your plays are therefore structurally successful? That you're able to communicate this instinct for rhythm to the play?

PINTER

No, not really, and that's my main concern, to get the structure right. I always write three drafts, but you have to leave it eventually. There comes a point when you say that's it, I can't do anything more. The only play which gets remotely near to a structural entity which satisfies me is *The Homecoming*. *The Birthday Party* and *The Caretaker* have too much writing... I want to iron it down, eliminate things. Too many words irritate me sometimes, but I can't help them, they just seem to come out—out of the fellow's mouth. I don't really examine my works too much, but I'm aware that quite often in what I write, some fellow at some point says an awful lot.

INTERVIEWER

Most people would agree that the strength in your plays lies in just this verbal aspect, the patterns and force of character you can get from it. Do you get these words from people you've heard talking—do you eavesdrop?

PINTER

I spend *no* time listening in that sense. Occasionally I hear something, as we all do, walking about. But the words come as I'm writing the characters, not before.

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INTERVIEWER

Why do you think the conversations in your plays are so effective?

PINTER

I don't know, I think possibly it's because people fall back on anything they can lay their hands on verbally to keep away from the danger of knowing, and of being known.

INTERVIEWER

What areas in writing plays give you the most trouble?

PINTER

They're all so inextricably interrelated I couldn't possibly judge.

INTERVIEWER

Several years ago, *Encounter* had an extensive series of quotations from people in the arts about the advisability of Britain joining the Common Market. Your statement was the shortest anyone made, "I have no interest in the matter and do not care what happens." Does this sum up your feeling about politics, or current affairs?

PINTER

Not really. Though that's exactly what I feel about the Common Market—I just don't care a damn about the Common Market. But it isn't quite true to say that I'm in any way indifferent to current affairs. I'm in the normal state of being very confused—uncertain, irritated, and indignant in turns, sometimes indifferent. Generally I try to get on with what I can do and leave it at that. I don't think I've got any kind of social function that's of any value, and politically there's no question of my getting involved because the issues are by no means simple—to be a politician you have to be able to present a simple picture even if you don't see things that way.

INTERVIEWER

Has it ever occurred to you to express political opinions through your characters?

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PINTER

No. Ultimately, politics do bore me, though I recognize they are responsible for a good deal of suffering. I distrust ideological statements of any kind.

INTERVIEWER

But do you think that the picture of personal threat which is sometimes presented on your stage is troubling in a larger sense, a political sense, or doesn't this have any relevance?

PINTER

I don't feel myself threatened by *any* political body or activity at all. I like living in England. I don't care about political structures—they don't alarm me, but they cause a great deal of suffering to millions of people.

I'll tell you what I really think about politicians. The other night I watched some politicians on television talking about Vietnam. I wanted very much to burst through the screen with a flame-thrower and burn their eyes out and their balls off and then inquire from them how they would assess this action from a political point of view.

INTERVIEWER

Would you ever use this anger in a politically-oriented play?

PINTER

I have occasionally out of irritation thought about writing a play with a satirical point. I once did, actually, a play that no one knows about. A full-length play written after *The Caretaker*. Wrote the whole damn thing in three drafts. It was called *The Hothouse* and was about an institution in which patients were kept: all that was presented was the hierarchy, the people who ran the institution; one never knew what happened to the patients or what they were there for or who they were. It was heavily satirical and it was quite useless. I never began to like any of the characters, they really didn't live at all. So I discarded the play at once. The characters were so

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purely cardboard. I was intentionally—for the only time, I think—trying to make a point, an explicit point, that these were nasty people and I disapproved of them. And therefore they didn't begin to live. Whereas in other plays of mine every single character, even a bastard like Goldberg in *The Birthday Party*, I care for.

INTERVIEWER

You often speak of your characters as living beings. Do they become so after you've written a play? While you're writing it?

PINTER

Both.

INTERVIEWER

As real as people you know?

PINTER

No, but different. I had a terrible dream, after I'd written *The Caretaker*, about the two brothers. My house burned down in the dream, and I tried to find out who was responsible. I was led through all sorts of alleys and cafés and eventually I arrived at an inner room somewhere and there were the two brothers from the play. And I said, so you burned down my house. They said don't be too worried about it, and I said I've got everything in there, everything, you don't realize what you've done, and they said it's all right, we'll compensate you for it, we'll look after you all right—the younger brother was talking—and thereupon I wrote them out a check for fifty quid... *I* gave *them* a check for fifty quid!

INTERVIEWER

Do you have a particular interest in psychology?

PINTER

No.

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INTERVIEWER

None at all? Did you have some purpose in mind in writing the speech where the older brother describes his troubles in a mental hospital at the end of Act II in *The Caretaker?*

PINTER

Well, I had a purpose in the sense that Aston suddenly opened his mouth. My purpose was to let him go on talking until he was finished and then... bring the curtain down. I had no ax to grind there. And the one thing that people have missed is that it isn't necessary to conclude that everything Aston says about his experiences in the mental hospital is true.

INTERVIEWER

There's a sense of terror and a threat of violence in most of your plays. Do you see the world as an essentially violent place?

PINTER

The world *is* a pretty violent place, it's as simple as that, so any violence in the plays comes out quite naturally. It seems to me an essential and inevitable factor.

I think what you're talking about began in *The Dumb Waiter*, which from my point of view is a relatively simple piece of work. The violence is really only an expression of the question of dominance and subservience, which is possibly a repeated theme in my plays. I wrote a short story a long time ago called "The Examination," and my ideas of violence carried on from there. That short story dealt very explicitly with two people in one room having a battle of an unspecified nature, in which the question was one of who was dominant at what point and how they were going to be dominant and what tools they would use to achieve dominance and how they would try to undermine the other person's dominance. A threat is constantly there: it's got to do with this question of being in the uppermost position, or attempting to be. That's something of what attracted me to do the screenplay of *The Servant*, which was someone else's story, you know. I

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wouldn't call this violence so much as a battle for positions, it's a very common, everyday thing.

INTERVIEWER

Do these ideas of everyday battles, or of violence, come from any experiences you've had yourself?

PINTER

Everyone encounters violence in some way or other. It so happens I did encounter it in quite an extreme form after the war, in the East End, when the Fascists were coming back to life in England. I got into quite a few fights down there. If you looked remotely like a Jew you might be in trouble. Also, I went to a Jewish club, by an old railway arch, and there were quite a lot of people often waiting with broken milk bottles in a particular alley we used to walk through. There were one or two ways of getting out of it—one was a purely physical way, of course, but you couldn't do anything about the milk bottles—*we* didn't have any milk bottles. The best way was to talk to them, you know, sort of "Are you all right?" "Yes, I'm all right." "Well, that's all right then, isn't it?" And all the time keep walking toward the lights of the main road.

Another thing: we were often taken for communists. If you went by, or happened to be passing, a Fascist's street meeting, and looked in any way antagonistic—this was in Ridley Road market, near Dalston Junction—they'd interpret your very being, especially if you had books under your arms, as evidence of your being a communist. There was a good deal of violence there, in those days.

INTERVIEWER

Did this lead you toward some kind of pacifism?

PINTER

I was fifteen when the war ended. There was never any question of my going when I was called up for military service three years later: I couldn't see any point in it at all. I refused

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to go. So I was taken in a police car to the medical examination. Then I had two tribunals and two trials. I could have gone to prison—I took my toothbrush to the trials—but it so happened that the magistrate was slightly sympathetic, so I was fined instead, thirty pounds in all. Perhaps I'll be called up again in the next war, but I won't go.

INTERVIEWER

Robert Brustein has said of modern drama, "The rebel dramatist becomes an evangelist proselytizing for his faith." Do you see yourself in that role?

PINTER

I don't know what he's talking about. I don't know for what faith I could possibly be proselytizing.

INTERVIEWER

The theater is a very competitive business. Are you, as a writer, conscious of competing against other playwrights?

PINTER

Good writing excites me, and makes life worth living. I'm never conscious of any competition going on here.

INTERVIEWER

Do you read things written about you?

PINTER

Yes. Most of the time I don't know what they're talking about; I don't really read them all the way through. Or I read it and it goes—if you asked me what had been said, I would have very little idea. But there are exceptions, mainly non-professional critics.

INTERVIEWER

How much are you aware of an audience when you write?

PINTER

Not very much. But I'm aware that this is a public medium.

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I don't want to *bore* the audience, I want to keep them glued to what happens. So I try to write as *exactly* as possible. I would try to do that anyway, audience or no audience.

INTERVIEWER

There is a story—mentioned by Brustein in the *The Theater of Revolt*—that Ionesco once left a performance of Genet's *The Blacks* because he felt he was being attacked, and the actors were enjoying it. Would you ever hope for a similar reaction in your audience? Would you react this way yourself?

PINTER

I've had that reaction—it's happened to me recently here in London, when I went to see *US*, the Royal Shakespeare Company's anti-Vietnam war production. There was a kind of attack—I don't like being subjected to propaganda, and I detest soapboxes. I want to present things clearly in my own plays, and sometimes this does make an audience very uncomfortable, but there's no question about causing offense for its own sake.

INTERVIEWER

Do you therefore feel the play failed to achieve its purpose —inspiring opposition to the war?

PINTER

Certainly. The chasm between the reality of the war in Vietnam and the image of what *US* presented on the stage was so enormous as to be quite preposterous. If it was meant to lecture or shock the audience I think it was most presumptuous. It's impossible to make a major theatrical statement about such a matter when television and the press have made everything so clear.

INTERVIEWER

Do you consciously make crisis situations humorous? Often an audience at your plays finds its laughter turning against itself as it realizes what the situation in the play actually is.

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PINTER

Yes, that's very true, yes. I'm rarely consciously writing humor, but sometimes I find myself laughing at some particular point which has suddenly struck me as being funny. I agree that more often than not the speech only *seems* to be funny—the man in question is actually fighting a battle for his life.

INTERVIEWER

There are sexual undertones in many of these crisis situations, aren't there? How do you see the use of sex in the theater today?

PINTER

I do object to one thing to do with sex: this scheme afoot on the part of many "liberal-minded" persons to open up obscene language to general commerce. It should be the dark secret language of the underworld. There are very few words —you shouldn't kill them by overuse. I have used such words once or twice in my plays, but I couldn't get them through the Lord Chamberlain. They're great, wonderful words, but must be used very sparingly. The pure publicity of freedom of language fatigues me, because it's a demonstration rather than something said.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think you've inspired any imitations? Have you ever seen anything in a film or theater which struck you as, well, Pinteresque?

PINTER

That word! These damn words and that word Pinteresque particularly—I don't know what they're bloody well talking about! I think it's a great burden for me to carry, and for other writers to carry... Oh, very occasionally I've thought listening to something, hello, that rings a bell, but it goes no further than that. I really do think that writers write on... just write, and I find it difficult to believe I'm any kind of in-

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fluence on other writers. I've seen very little evidence of it, anyway; other people seem to see more evidence of it than I do.

INTERVIEWER

The critics?

PINTER

It's a great mistake to pay any attention to *them*. I think, you see, that this is an age of such overblown publicity and overemphatic pinning down. I'm a very good example of a writer who can write, but I'm not as good as all that. I'm just a writer; and I think that I've been overblown tremendously because there's a dearth of really fine writing, and people tend to make too much of a meal. All you can do is try to write as well as you can.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think your plays will be performed fifty years from now? Is universality a quality you consciously strive for?

PINTER

I have no idea whether my plays will be performed in fifty years, and it's of no moment to me. I'm pleased when what I write makes sense in South America or Yugoslavia—it's gratifying. But I certainly don't strive for universality—I've got enough to strive for just writing a bloody play!

INTERVIEWER

Do you think the success you've known has changed your writing?

PINTER

No, but it did become more difficult. I think I've gone beyond something now. When I wrote the first three plays in 1957 I wrote them from the point of view of *writing* them; the whole world of putting on plays was quite remote—I

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knew they could never be done in the Reps I was acting in, and the West End and London were somewhere on the other side of the moon. So I wrote these plays completely unself-consciously. There's no question that over the years it's become more difficult to preserve the kind of freedom that's essential to writing, but when I do write, it's there. For a while it became more difficult to avoid the searchlights and all that. And it took me five years to write a stage play, *The Homecoming*, after *The Caretaker*. I did a lot of things in the meantime, but writing a stage play, which is what I really wanted to do, I couldn't. Then I wrote *The Homecoming*, for good or bad, and I felt much better. But *now* I'm back in the same boat—I want to write a play, it buzzes all the time in me, and I can't put pen to paper. Something people don't realize is the great boredom one has with oneself, and just to see those words come down again on paper, I think oh Christ, everything I do seems to be predictable, unsatisfactory, and hopeless. It keeps me awake. Distractions don't matter to me—if I had something to write I would write it. Don't ask me why I want to keep on with plays at all!

INTERVIEWER

Do you think you'd ever use freer techniques as a way of starting writing again?

PINTER

I can enjoy them in other people's plays—I thought the *Marat/Sade* was a damn good evening, and other very different plays like *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* I've also enjoyed. But I'd never use such stage techniques myself.

INTERVIEWER

Does this make you feel behind the times in any way?

PINTER

I *am* a very traditional playwright—for instance I insist on having a curtain in all my plays. I write curtain lines for that reason! And even when directors like Peter Hall or Claude

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Régy in Paris want to do away with them, I insist they stay. For me everything has to do with shape, structure, and overall unity. All this jamboree in "Happenings" and eight-hour movies is great fun for the people concerned, I'm sure...

INTERVIEWER

Shouldn't they be having fun?

PINTER

If they're all having fun I'm delighted, but count me out completely, I wouldn't stay more than five minutes. The trouble is I find it all so *noisy*, and I like quiet things. There seems to be such a jazz and jaggedness in so much modern art, and a great deal of it is inferior to its models: Joyce contains so much of Burroughs, for example, in his experimental techniques, though Burroughs is a fine writer on his own. This doesn't mean I don't regard myself as a contemporary writer: I mean, I'm *here*.

—LAWRENCE M. BENSKY

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Two poems by Tom Clark

Superballs

You approach me carrying a book
The instructions you read carry me back beyond birth
To childhood and a courtyard bouncing a ball
The town is silent there is only one recreation
It's throwing the ball against the wall and waiting
To see if it returns
One day
The wall reverses
The ball bounces the other way
Across this barrier into the future
Where it begets occupations names
This is known as the human heart a muscle
A woman adopts it it enters her chest
She falls from a train
The woman rebounds 500 miles back to her childhood
The heart falls from her clothing you retrieve it
Turn it over in your hand the trademark
Gives the name of a noted maker of balls

Elastic flexible yes but this is awful
You say
Her body is limp not plastic
Your heart is missing from it
You replace your heart in your breast and go on your way

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Splashes

The rat who came last night scratching
By the door—did you appreciate
He might be wanting to converse?
In your sleep there was an outburst
Which left small wet stars
Like a problem situated on the triangle
Of unusual cloth. In the night it is popcorn,
In the day blood, there is no end
To your desires in the unreasonable booth.

As when the cancer enters the crib
To kiss, it raises the pitch of a corroded
Family debate over whether the eyes of
The friends who are sticking their hands
Into, not around, your flesh on the planet.
I don't know, it might be a good thing to eat the infant
Rather than sting him, which raises the lance into the tears.

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City Boy

Leonard Michaels

"Phillip," she said, "this is crazy."

I didn't agree or disagree. She wanted some answer. I bit her neck. She kissed my ear. It was nearly three in the morning. We had just returned. The apartment was dark and quiet. We were on the living room floor and she repeated, "Phillip, this is crazy." Her crinoline broke under us like cinders. Furniture loomed all around in the darkness—settee, chairs, a table with a lamp. Pictures were cloudy blotches drifting above. But no lights, no things to look at, no eyes in her head. She was underneath me and warm. The rug was warm, soft as mud, deep. Her crinoline cracked like sticks. Our naked bellies clapped together. Air fired out like farts. I took it as applause. The chairs smirked and spit between their feet. The chandelier clicked giddy teeth. The clock ticked as if to split its glass. "Phillip," she said, "this is crazy."A little voice against the grain and power. Not enough to stop me. Yet once I had been a man of feeling. We went to concerts, walked in the park, trembled in the maid's room. Now in the foyer, a flash of hair and claws. We stumbled to the living room floor. She said, "Phillip, this is crazy." Then silence, except in my head where a conference table was set up, ashtrays scattered about. Priests, ministers and rabbis were rushing to take seats. I wanted their opinion, but came. They vanished. A

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voice lingered, faintly crying, "You could mess up the rug, Phillip, break something..." Her fingers pinched my back like ants. I expected a remark to kill good death. She said nothing. The breath in her nostrils whipped mucus. It cracked in my ears like flags. I dreamed we were in her mother's Cadillac, trailing flags. I heard her voice before I heard the words. "Phillip, this is crazy. My parents are in the next room." Her cheek jerked against mine, her breasts were knuckles in my nipples. I burned. Good death was killed. I burned with hate. A rabbi shook his finger, "You shouldn't hate." I lifted on my elbows, sneering in pain. She wrenched her hips, tightened muscles in belly and neck. She said, "Move." It was imperative to move. Her parents were thirty feet away. Down the hall between Utrillos and Vlamincks, through the door, flick the light and I'd see them. Maybe like us, Mr. Cohen adrift on the missus. Hair sifted down my cheek. "Let's go to the maid's room," she whispered. I was reassured. She tried to move. I kissed her mouth. Her crinoline smashed like sugar. Pig that I was, I couldn't move. The clock ticked hysterically. Ticks piled up like insects. Muscles lapsed in her thighs. Her fingers scratched on my neck as if looking for buttons. She slept. I sprawled like a bludgeoned pig, eyes open, loose lips. I flopped into sleep, in her, in the rug, in our scattered clothes.

Dawn hadn't shown between the slats in the blinds. Her breathing sissed in my ear. I wanted to sleep more, but needed a cigarette. I thought of the cold avenue, the lonely subway ride. Where could I buy a newspaper, a cup of coffee? This was crazy, dangerous, a waste of time. The maid might arrive, her parents might wake. I had to get started. My hand pushed along the rug to find my shirt, touched a brass lion's paw, then a lamp cord.

A naked heel bumped wood.

She woke, her nails in my neck. "Phillip, did you hear?" I whispered, "Quiet." My eyes rolled like Milton's. Furniture loomed, whirled. "Dear God," I prayed, "save my ass." The steps ceased. Neither of us breathed. The clock ticked. She trembled. I pressed my cheek against her mouth to keep her from talking. We heard pajamas rustle, phlegmy breathing,

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fingernails scratching hair. A voice, "Veronica, don't you think it's time you sent Phillip home?"

A murmur of assent started in her throat, swept to my cheek, fell back drowned like a child in a well. Mr. Cohen had spoken. He stood ten inches from our legs. Maybe less. It was impossible to tell. His fingernails grated through hair. His voice hung in the dark with the quintessential question. Mr. Cohen, scratching his crotch, stood now as never in the light. Considerable. No tool of his wife, whose energy in business kept him eating, sleeping, overlooking the park. Pinochle change in his pocket four nights a week. But were they his words? Or was he the oracle of Mrs. Cohen, lying sleepless, irritated, waiting for him to get me out? I didn't breathe. I didn't move. If he had come on his own he would leave without an answer. His eyes weren't adjusted to the dark. He couldn't see. We lay at his feet like worms. He scratched, made smacking noises with his mouth.

The question of authority is always with us. Who is responsible for the triggers pulled, buttons pressed, the gas, the fire? Doubt banged my brain. My heart lay in the fist of intellect, which squeezed out feeling like piss out of kidneys. Mrs. Cohen's voice demolished doubt, feeling, intellect. It ripped from the bedroom.

"For God's sake, Morris, don't be banal. Tell the schmuck to go home and keep his own parents awake all night, if he has any."

Veronica's tears slipped down my cheeks. Mr. Cohen sighed, shuffled, made a strong voice. "Veronica, tell Phillip..." His foot came down on my ass. He drove me into his daughter. I drove her into his rug.

"I don't believe it," he said.

He walked like an antelope, lifting hoof from knee, but stepped down hard. Sensitive to the danger of movement, yet finally impulsive, flinging his pot at the earth in order to cross it. His foot brought me his weight and character, a hundred fifty-five pounds of stomping *schlemiel*, in a mode of apprehension so primal we must share it with bugs. Let armies stomp me to insensate pulp—I'll yell "Cohen" when he arrives.

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Veronica squealed, had a contraction, fluttered, gagged a shriek, squeezed, and up like a frog out of the hand of a child I stood spread-legged, bolt naked, great with eyes. Mr. Cohen's face was eyes in my eyes. A secret sharer. We faced each other like men accidentally met in hell. He retreated flapping, moaning, "I will not believe it one bit."

Veronica said, "Daddy?"

"Who else you no good bum?"

The rug raced. I smacked against blinds, glass broke and I whirled. Veronica said, "Phillip," and I went off in streaks, a sparrow in the room, here, there, early American, baroque and rococo. Veronica wailed, "Phillip." Mr. Cohen screamed, "I'll kill him." I stopped at the door, seized the knob. Mrs. Cohen yelled from the bedroom, "Morris, did something break? Answer me."

"I'll kill that bastid."

"Morris, if something broke you'll rot for a month."

"Mother, stop it," said Veronica. "Phillip, come back."

The door slammed. I was outside, naked as a wolf.

I needed poise. Without poise the street was impossible. Blood shot to my brain, thought blossomed. I'd walk on my hands. Beards were fashionable. I kicked up my feet, kicked the elevator button, faced the door and waited. I bent one elbow like a knee. The posture of a clothes model, easy, poised. Blood coiled down to my brain, weeds bourgeoned. I had made a bad impression. There was no other way to see it. But all right. We needed a new beginning. Everyone does. Yet how few of us know when it arrives. Mr. Cohen had never spoken to me before; this was a breakthrough. There had been a false element in our relationship. It was wiped out. I wouldn't kid myself with the idea that he had nothing to say. I'd had enough of his silent treatment. It was worth being naked to see how mercilessly I could think. I had his number. Mrs. Cohen's, too. I was learning every second. I was a city boy. No innocent shitkicker from Jersey. I was the A train, the Fifth Avenue bus. I could be a cop. My name was Phillip, my style New York City. I poked the elevator button with my toe. It rang in the lobby, waking Ludwig. He'd come for me,

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rotten with sleep. Not the first time. He always took me down, walked me through the lobby and let me out on the avenue. Wires began tugging him up the shaft. I moved back, conscious of my genitals hanging upside down. Absurd consideration; we were both men one way or another. There were social distinctions enforced by his uniform, but they would vanish at the sight of me. "The unaccommodated thing itself." "Off ye lendings!" The greatest play is about a naked man. A picture of Lear came to me, naked, racing through the wheat. I could be cool. I thought of Ludwig's uniform, hat, whipcord collar. It signified his authority. Perhaps he would be annoyed, in his authority, by the sight of me naked. Few people woke him at such hours. Worse, I never tipped him. Could I have been so indifferent month after month? In a crisis you discover everything. Then it's too late. Know yourself, indeed. You need a crisis every day. I refused to think about it. I sent my mind after objects. It returned with the chairs, settee, table and chandelier. Where were my clothes? I sent it along the rug. It found buttons, eagles stamped in brass. I recognized them as the buttons on Ludwig's coat. Eagles, beaks like knives, shrieking for tips. Fuck'm, I thought. Who's Ludwig? A big coat, a whistle, white gloves and a General MacArthur hat. I could understand him completely. He couldn't begin to understand me. A naked man is mysterious. But aside from that, what did he know? I dated Veronica Cohen and went home late. Did he know I was out of work? That I lived in a slum downtown? Of course not.

Possibly under his hat was a filthy mind. He imagined Veronica and I might be having sexual intercourse. He resented it. Not that he hoped for the privilege himself, in his coat and soldier hat, but he had a proprietary interest in the building and its residents. I came from another world. *The* other world against which Ludwig defended the residents. Wasn't I like a burglar sneaking out late, making him my accomplice? I undermined his authority, his dedication. He despised me. It was obvious. But no one thinks such thoughts. It made me laugh to think them. My genitals jumped. The elevator door slid open. He didn't say a word. I padded inside like a seal. The

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door slid shut. Instantly, I was ashamed of myself, thinking as I had about him. I had no right. A better man than I. His profile was an etching by Dürer. Good peasant stock. How had he fallen to such work? Existence precedes essence. At the controls, silent, enduring, he gave me strength for the street. Perhaps the sun would be up, birds in the air. The door slid open. Ludwig walked ahead of me through the lobby. He needed new heels. The door of the lobby was half a ton of glass, encased in iron vines and leaves. Not too much for Ludwig. He turned, looked down into my eyes. I watched his lips move.

"I vun say sumding. Yur bisniss vot you do. Bud vy you mek her miserable? Nod led her slip. She has beks unter her eyes."

Ludwig had feelings. They spoke to mine. Beneath the uniform, a man. Essence precedes existence. Even rotten with sleep, thick, dry bags under his eyes, he saw, he sympathized. The discretion demanded by his job forbade anything tangible, a sweater, a hat. "Ludwig," I whispered, "you're all right." It didn't matter if he heard me. He knew I said something. He knew it was something nice. He grinned, tugged the the door open with both hands. I slapped out onto the avenue. I saw no one, dropped to my feet and glanced back through the door. Perhaps for the last time. I lingered, indulged a little melancholy. Ludwig walked to a couch in the rear of the lobby. He took off his coat, rolled it into a pillow and lay down. I had never stayed to see him do that before, but always rushed off to the subway. As if I were indifferent to the life of the building. Indeed, like a burglar. I seized the valuables and fled to the subway. I stayed another moment, watching good Ludwig, so I could hate myself. He assumed the modest, saintly posture of sleep. One leg here, the other there. His good head on his coat. A big arm across his stomach, the hand between his hips. He made a fist and punched up and down.

I went down the avenue, staying close to the buildings. Later I would work up a philosophy. Now I wanted to sleep, forget. I hadn't the energy for moral complexities: Ludwig cross-eyed, thumping his pelvis in such a nice lobby. Mirrors,

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glazed pots, rubber plants ten feet high. As if he were generating all of it. As if it were part of his job. I hurried. The buildings were on my left, the park on my right. There were doormen in all the buildings; God knows what was in the park. No cars were moving. No people in sight. Streetlights glowed in a receding sweep down to Fifty-ninth Street and beyond. A wind pressed my face like Mr. Cohen's breath. Such hatred. Imponderable under any circumstances, a father cursing his daughter. Why? A fright in the dark? Freud said things about fathers and daughters. It was too obvious, too hideous. I shuddered and went more quickly. I began to run. In a few minutes I was at the spit-mottled steps of the subway. I had hoped for vomit. Spit is no challenge for bare feet. Still, I wouldn't complain. It was sufficiently disgusting to make me live in spirit. I went down the steps flatfooted, stamping, elevated by each declension. I was a city boy, no mincing creep from the sticks.

A Negro man sat in the change booth. He wore glasses, a white shirt, black knit tie and a silver tie clip. I saw a mole on his right cheek. His hair had spots of grey, as if strewn with ashes. He was reading a newspaper. He didn't hear me approach, didn't see my eyes take him in, figure him out. Shirt, glasses, tie—I knew how to address him. I coughed. He looked up.

"Sir, I don't have any money. Please let me through the turnstile. I come this way every week and will certainly pay you the next time."

He merely looked at me. Then his eyes flashed like fangs. Instinctively, I guessed what he felt. He didn't owe favors to a white man. He didn't have to bring his allegiance to the transit authority into question for my sake.

"Hey, man, you naked?"

"Yes."

"Step back a little."

I stepped back.

"You're naked."

I nodded.

"Get your naked ass the hell out of here."

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"Sir," I said, "I know these are difficult times, but can't we be reasonable? I know that..."

"Scat, mother, go home."

I crouched as if to dash through the turnstile. He crouched, too. It proved he would come after me. I shrugged, turned back toward the steps. The city was infinite. There were many other subways. But why had he become so angry? Did he think I was a bigot? Maybe I was running around naked to get him upset. His anger was incomprehensible otherwise. It made me feel like a bigot. First a burglar, then a bigot. I needed a cigarette. I could hardly breathe. Air was too good for me. At the top of the steps, staring down, stood Veronica. She had my clothes.

"Poor, poor," she said.

I said nothing. I snatched my underpants and put them on. She had my cigarettes ready. I tried to light one, but the match failed. I threw down the cigarette and the matchbook. She retrieved them as I dressed. She lit the cigarette for me and held my elbow to help me keep my balance. I finished dressing, took the cigarette. We walked back toward her building. The words "thank you" sat in my brain like driven spikes. She nibbled her lip.

"How are things at home?" My voice was casual and morose, as if no answer could matter.

"All right," she said, her voice the same as mine. She took her tone from me. I liked that sometimes, sometimes not. Now I didn't like it. I discovered I was angry. Until she said that I had no idea I was angry. I flicked the cigarette into the gutter and suddenly I knew why. I didn't love her. The cigarette sizzled in the gutter. Like truth. I didn't love her. Black hair, green eyes, I didn't love her. Slender legs. I didn't. Last night I had looked at her and said to myself, "I hate communism." Now I wanted to step on her head. Nothing less than that would do. If it was a perverted thought, then it was a perverted thought. I wasn't afraid to admit it to myself.

"All right? Really? Is that true?"

Blah, blah, blah. Who asked those questions? A zombie; not Phillip of the foyer and rug. He died in flight. I was sorry.

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sincerely sorry, but with clothes on my back I knew certain feelings would not survive humiliation. It was so clear it was thrilling. Perhaps she felt it, too. In any case she would have to accept it. The nature of the times. We are historical creatures. Veronica and I were finished. Before we reached her door I would say deadly words. They'd come in a natural way, kill her a little. Veronica, let me step on your head or we're through. Maybe we're through, anyway. It would deepen her looks, give philosophy to what was only charming in her face. The dawn was here. A new day. Cruel, but change is cruel. I could bear it. Love is infinite and one. Women are not. Neither are men. The human condition. Nearly unbearable.

"No, it's not true," she said.

"What's not?"

"Things aren't all right at home."

I nodded intelligently, sighed, "Of course not. Tell me the truth, please. I don't want to hear anything else."

"Daddy had a heart attack."

"Oh God," I yelled. "Oh God, no."

I seized her hand, dropped it. She let it fall. I seized it again. No use. I let it fall. She let it drift between us. We stared at one another. She said, "What were you going to say? I can tell you were going to say something."

I stared, said nothing.

"Don't feel guilty, Phillip. Let's just go back to the apartment and have some coffee."

"What can I say?"

"Don't say anything. He's in the hospital and my mother is there. Let's just go upstairs and not say anything."

"Not say anything. Like moral imbeciles go slurp coffee and not say anything? What are we, nihilists or something? Assassins? Monsters?"

"Phillip, there's no one in the apartment. I'll make us coffee and eggs..."

"How about a roast beef? Got a roast beef in the freezer?"

"Phillip, he's *my* father."

We were at the door. I rattled. I was in a trance. This was life. Death!

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"Indeed, your father. I'll accept that. I can do no less."

"Phillip, shut up. Ludwig."

The door opened. I nodded to Ludwig. What did he know about life and death? Give him a uniform and a quiet lobby—that's life and death. In the elevator he took the controls. "Always got a hand on the controls, eh Ludwig?"

Veronica smiled in a feeble, grateful way. She liked to see me get along with the help. Ludwig said, "Dots right."

"Ludwig has been our doorman for years, Phillip. Ever since I was a little girl."

"Wow," I said.

"Dots right."

The door slid open. Veronica said, "Thank you, Ludwig." I said, "Thank you, Ludwig."

"Vulcum."

"Vulcum? You mean, 'welcome'? Hey, Ludwig, how long you been in this country?"

Veronica was driving her key into the door.

"How come you never learned to talk American, baby?"

"Phillip, come here."

"I'm saying something to Ludwig."

"Come here right now."

"I have to go, Ludwig."

"Vulcum."

She went directly to the bathroom. I waited in the hallway between Vlamincks and Utrillos. The Utrillos were pale and flat. The Vlamincks were thick, twisted and red. Raw meat on one wall, dry stone on the other. Mrs. Cohen had an eye for contrasts. I heard Veronica sob. She ran water in the sink, sobbed, sat down, peed. She saw me looking and kicked the door shut.

"At a time like this..."

"I don't like you looking."

"Then why did you leave the door open? You obviously don't know your own mind."

"Go away, Phillip. Wait in the living room."

"Just tell me why you left the door open."

"Phillip, you're going to drive me nuts. Go away. I can't

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do a damn thing if I know you're standing there."

The living room made me feel better. The settee, the chandelier full of teeth and the rug were company. Mr. Cohen was everywhere, a simple, diffuse presence. He jingled change in his pocket, looked out the window and was happy he could see the park. He took a little antelope step and tears came into my eyes. I sat among his mourners. A rabbi droned platitudes: Mr. Cohen was generous, kind, beloved by his wife and daughter. "How much did he weigh?" I shouted. The phone rang.

Veronica came running down the hall. I went and stood at her side when she picked up the phone. I stood dumb, stiff as a hatrack. She was whimpering, "Yes, yes..." I nodded my head yes, yes, thinking it was better than no, no. She put the phone down.

"It was my mother. Daddy's all right. Mother is staying with him in his room at the hospital and they'll come home together tomorrow."

Her eyes looked at mine. At them as if they were as flat and opaque as hers. I said in a slow, stupid voice, "You're allowed to do that? Stay overnight in a hospital with a patient? Sleep in his room?" She continued looking at my eyes. I shrugged, looked down. She took my shirt front in a fist like a bite. She whispered. I said, "What?" She whispered again, "Fuck me." The clock ticked like crickets. The Vlamincks spilled blood. We sank into the rug as if it were quicksand.

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Mister Horse

Mmmm
I get up and am seized by the present
Whose presence is
As a roof fits on a house whose car in the garage
Backs out
And in the back seat
Childhood is normal but the scaffolding thrown up around
The road is built with an insane logic
Which is at once its interest and its uselessness
Save as torment

Not an example is a loose nail here
One I caught my sleeve on
But I've moved
Up to the floor all in blue
And the décor is stunning in its vacuity
As if the air were suddenly sucked out
By a passing machine
The one we ride and operate
With our hands and feet

So the landscape turns out to be a dial
Of stars and numbers
No less fascinating than the cold pair of scissors
That cut the shirt you are now wearing
The starry one of water
In the quickly deflating evening

Evening is so small these days
It's the size of a green pea
The small expensive kind
That come in a silver can
That rolls for a long time
Decorated with a fleur-de-lis

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Which is the sole bud in the sky at the moment

Other times
You'd have the flower in your buttonhole
Its center round and packed with goodness
As is the yellow of a slightly fried egg

But the egg is exempt
From nature's clumsy machinery
It is something very much like your own heart
A lady drops on the way home
On the sidewalk in some small town in Arizona
Where it fries secretly
And is then whisked away by a tumbleweed
Or eaten by a horse
The same one I feel as if I mentioned a moment ago

I would like to devote my special attention
To this horse
Let me tell you about it
It can jump a bush a small one
It is the kindest horse in the world
That is why it is the subject of so many thoughts
That is why it bites both the apple and you
And why when the blinders are put on
It weeps

And with good reason!
For now it is a mere piece of glossy paper
The only furniture in this room
Whose blue it takes on
And whose flower has gone a terrible green
Under the severe influence of the lighting
Whose manipulations increase
In proportion to the scales they're laid against

Yes, I'm afraid today's just a chart
Plowing through a stormy sea
But the horse is still here!
Yes he's at F-3

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And is marked with a blue and green dot
The green is probably a concession to the plant world
Whose proper domain
Is growing on the living
This sort of radiant fungus
You noticed in the last picture I sent you

I didn't think you'd see it
Since the photograph was not of me even
Though at first my thoughts filled it with me
So I sent it as a compensation
For the money I owe you
And whose astonishing presence neither
Of us will ever really know
Perhaps we have been short-changed by the modern world
But even if so we got our receipt

Maybe we'd better keep it
Since nature is so expensive
And day pops up like a big number from inside a cash register
Perhaps I'd better forget about the forest and the hills
And the balls that lie there covered with pins

These are the same pins I stuck in you
To wish you a speedy recovery
And to hint that you need no longer pursue the rain
With your magnificent intelligence
Which is sparkling and fizzing loudly
Across these many years to me

But now I really must be going
The horse is getting restless and no wonder
I only gave him a piece of paper to eat today
By the way
He's just a mule
But I don't think that will make any difference
To him in the long run
Also I hope you won't mind
If I send him to visit you sometime

—RON PADGETT

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Midnight

When I was little and lived on Queens Boulevard my
mother told me stories the coffee is boiling
The soldier at left throws his grenade into the air
I conjure up the cold magic of winter and its prevailing melancholy
Ah, I see the secret hormone I gave you has kept you healthy as well as huge
The beast's gargantuan tail lashes out at me The trees sway
a sudden change takes place We've met again and you don't remember me

She has elegant long legs and a bouncing walk: Yes, I understand,
I'm on the greatest adventure ever experienced by man:
I need sex like the normal person needs air, my breath
comes out in tortured gasps, I jab at the air: there was something
about her sexual appeal I couldn't ignore, disappearing
into the maze of tunnels with nothing going right, an electrical
excitement without any logic, using every portion of my nervous system.

—TONY TOWI

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Letters of E. E. Cummings to Ezra Pound

Edited by
F. W. Dupee and George Stade

NOTE

Here is a representative selection from the letters of E. E. Cummings to Ezra Pound that have so far come to light. By and large they appear here just as Cummings wrote them, with his often eccentric punctuation and his verbal byplay intact. The spacing of headings and most margins has, however, been regularized for the printer's convenience. A few obviously unintentional spellings have been corrected (Cummings was a good speller when correct spelling was in question.) Deletions are rare and are indicated by three asterisks. Deletions occur where the original is illegible, or where Cummings quotes at length from some book he has been reading, or—in two cases—where intimate material is involved. In one other instance the name of the person concerned is represented by an initial (G—). Footnotes, relegated to the end, have been kept to a minimum. The editors have assumed that most of the persons named will be known to most readers. They have further assumed that it would be an impertinence to explicate Cummings' verbal coinages, his odd transliterations from French and other foreign languages, the tricks he plays with people's names. Two

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examples, both from the letter of October 24, 1952, should suffice as clues: "poor shawn shay" = *pour changer* = "for a change"; "O'Possum" = "Old Possum" = Pound's pet name for T .S. Eliot. (Eliot's name undergoes other curious deformations elsewhere in the letters.)

Now a few words about Cummings' relations with Pound. They first met in Paris in 1921. Cummings reports the event in a letter to his parents dated July 23 of that year:

> The other night, as we were walking back from the Rip revue "Ça Va" Pound disengaged himself from a pillar and bowed. Thayer* had previously threatened to allow me to meet the great one, I had demurred. "Sooner than might have been expected" was P's remark: leaving the editor at that person's hotel I began an evening with the poet. Which lasted until the croissement of the Boulevard S Germain with the rue des Saints Pères, where I tentatively promised to visit the great one and disappeared. If it would amuse you: Mr. Ezra Pound is a man of my own height, reddish goatee and ear whiskers, heavier built, moves nicely, temperament very similar to J. Sibley Watson Jr. (as remarked by Thayer)—same timidity and subtlety... Altogether, for me, a gymnastic personality. Or in other words somebody, and intricate.

When they first met, Pound was 36 and Cummings 26. Pound had published his first volume in 1908 and had long been the leading poet of the (then) younger generation. Cummings had been introduced to Pound's poetry by S. Foster Damon while Cummings and Damon were Harvard undergraduates and Cummings was still writing verse inspired by Shelley, Swinburne and Rossetti. Pound's example contributed greatly to the younger poet's transformation from a belated Romantic into an extreme Modernist. Many of Cummings' poems in the new style, as well as reproductions of several of his paintings, had appeared in the new *Dial* during its first year. They had brought him both admiration and notoriety and were unquestionably known to Pound. Meanwhile, between his Harvard years and the date of his meeting with Pound, Cummings had undergone what was a crucial personal experience. While serving with the Harjes-Norton ambulance corps in France in 1917, Cummings, together with his friend William Slater Brown, had been arrested by the French authorities on

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* Scofield Thayer, like J. Sibley Watson, Jr., mentioned below, was a former Harvard classmate of Cummings. Thayer and Watson were co-founders of *The Dial* which, in its new format, made its first appearance in January, 1920.

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vaguely conceived charges of possible treason and confined for several months in a French concentration camp. This experience Cummings described in *The Enormous Room*, a book written before he met Pound and published the following year.

Pound and Cummings presumably met more than once during the latter's stay in Europe in the years 1921–23. In the summer or fall of 1922 Cummings wrote jestingly to Slater Brown from Rapallo, Italy: "Pound's here with an ugly harem." They met rarely thereafter, when Cummings was in Europe or when, in 1939, Pound paid his first visit to the United States in nearly thirty years. (As the letters of 1935 show, Pound planned a visit to America that year but abandoned the plan.) Meanwhile the two poets exchanged copies of their books, together with occasional letters. In 1934, in the *New English Weekly*, Pound reviewed *Eimi*, Cummings' account of a trip to Soviet Russia in 1931. Cummings remained firmly loyal to Pound, privately and publicly, during the widespread hysteria following Pound's arrest in Italy in 1945 for alleged treason and his long years of incarceration in Washington, D. C. But Cummings did not share either Pound's fascist beliefs or Pound's tendency to substitute "hate," as Cummings called it, for "love" and "joy."

True, his letters are sprinkled with words such as "kike" and "mick." For his biographer, Charles Norman, Cummings attempted an explanation. By such words, he said in effect, he meant to designate those persons of any group who allow their individuality to be submerged by their group roles: e.g. "Merricins," "limies." To Charles Norman, Cummings also said (ca. 1957): "from my standpoint not EEC but EP is the authentic 'innovator'; the trailblazer of an epoch." But Ezra Pound wrote to Mr. Norman: "I do not think Mr. Cummings is indebted to me for any of the brilliance of his style, which is intensely personal." Cummings died September 4, 1963.

For indispensable assistance in gathering and documenting this group of letters the editors are greatly indebted to Charles Norman's biography, *The Magic-Maker: E. E. Cummings* (1958; revised edition 1964); to Ezra Pound's daughter, Mary di Rachewiltz; and above all to the poet's widow, Marion Cummings. Certain Pound letters which pertain to this correspondence can be found in the *Letters of Ezra Pound 1907–1941*, edited by D. D. Paige, and published by Harcourt, Brace. The present letters will form part of a volume, *Selected Letters of E. E. Cummings*, edited by F. W. Dupee and George Stade, to be published in the near future by Harcourt, Brace & World.

F. W. D. and G. S.

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one three thirty

[No salutation]

when through who-the-unotherish twilight up drops but his niblicks Sir Oral Né Ferdinand Joegesq[1] (disarmed to the nonteeth by loseable scripture befisto -zr- P—nd subjesting etsemina our lightwrittens)and him as mightily distant from a fit of the incheerfuls as am our hero but naturally encore when the ittorian extroverts Well why not send your portrait of you and your portrait of me? J,says sprouts,itch'll bepigged,if only in the name of Adver the Tisement;but will they immaculate it on t'other conception(meaning Brussels)which being respondfully preanswered we thusforth are proseeding.—Play in Regress[2] meanwhile(sub rosa s.v.p.)am trying to untangle from Carpy D.M.(alias Kid)Liverright; with a view to otherwhere(post quite the usual literally decades of shushment) pub- among whispers of Too bad & Say foo & Every Lawrence Has A stalling & What We Need Is More welfare to legs or the importance of being arnnest & A William Bleats Is A Johnnycake But Achilles Is Only A heel -lish a picturebook called CIOPW[3] among whose Os occur likenesses of the unlikenesses beforementioned:but Ye Kid is hitting in the clinches and ruffurree Brandt&Brandt's one glasseye had an attack of sic unleashing pandemonium until the audience was on my feet to a manhole(what Comma Indeed comma Is civleyesehshun)?—Tears Lyut

I hope Variétés won't feel united,under the waistland or viceversa...
For the rest,I am proud to be "translated" as you select

A recent cable from interrogation point reads: Masser Zorach maybe own one piece nicotine redman stop have dispatched angel with suitable prayers for closeup stop no doubt Western Electric will have them talking soon but however(signed)the enormous room stop tulips & chimneys stop xli poems stop & stop is 5 stop him stop

It is a pleasure to hear from you, sir!

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DEAR POUND— 1/2/35

may I insult my intelligence by reminding me that you are intrinsically what ye knights & ladies of ye slippery pasteboards have nicnamed A Trump,while extrinsically you ressemble what those self-appointed stewards of a heavenly realm or "spiritual roofgarden"(as my leaning from his unitarian pulpit with his economicosociologico background where backgrounds belong i.e. in front of you mightily father entitled it) call The Last ditto?

there is a miracle in NYCity. This miracle is worth your travelling to NYCity. This miracle is a "natural" history museum. As one(if not two)would expect,nothing in this museum is natural. All the animals are not alive(this would be natural)or dead(this would not be unnatural)but stuffed. Natural history museums are made by fools unlike me.But only God can stuff a tree;hence the trees are not stuffed,they are merely sectioned. I ardently recommend the tree room, in which is a sectioned tree,cross may I add,conclusively proving that it began growing 500 A.D. That is a very big thing for a tree to prove, Mr P; but that tree is a very big tree. The "rings",which are how a tree grows,have been counted and grouped and marked in groups and the groups have been labelled with flags bearing dates,Mr P,from the centre or birth of that tree to its circumference or murder. Of course if that tree hadn't been murdered,& murdered crosswise,that tree would have remained a mute inglorious milton. Naturally this milton would have been alive,but science doesn't care for this. Science never did care for what is alive,you know;hence mitrailleuses. What is alive has no sections,either transverse longitudinal or sagittal. Besides,what is alive has a strictly unscientific habit of growing. Corpses(if properly prepared)do not grow,hence anatomy. Close the window,Mr Manship,I feel a draghtsmanship. Science,as we both know,cares for what my father(towering like a doge through unpunctual air cluttered with wishless refractions from fragments of prettily coloured infratransparency)thunderingly described as A Spiritual Roofgarden. Donnez-moi un arbre,SVP.

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But to return to the unnatural itstory ponderum:having heard the old tree's story, we thank the old tree and proceed (for we are proceeders). We are now in the evolution room. A tree is just a tree but now we have left trees on our right and we have attained to a hollow rectangle pardon me cube full of evolution;evolution meaning all about animals. So now,I take it,we are at last among all about animals. And what do we find in this all about animals room? Why,a tree! Yessir. And not a sectioned tree either. Not an alive tree,of course. Naturally not a dead tree. Know. This tree is even more unnatural than you or I could believe— for it is a manufactured tree. I mean even that somebody made it in his spare time out of the ingredients of a discarded musicbox and a pair of old bicycletires. But mark you:every inch,née centimeter, of this multifariously manufactured & ceremoniously synthetic phenomenon or tree is labelled;just like the real tree but not the phenomenon we just came from. That is confusing at first,Mr P, until I read you a few of the labels. Scientists are of course pederasts,as we neither know nor care;& unnaturally enough this natural history museum is a temple or cathedral of the scientific spirit,so let us get a little scientific spirit for ourselves. Standing beside this strictly scientific and not alive and not dead and not even stuffed tree,Mr P,let us pretend(P is for pretend)that we are pederasts(no offence)comma too. I reiterate:to put the whole thing in a nutshell—let us start at the bottom. What is the bottom of this tree? The bottom is PROTISTA. What is the beginning of the trunk, just above the bottom? PROTOZOA. Welwel. What happens then? A branch,bedad. The name of which branch is which? Wel it seems to be two branches. I mean that there seems to be a fork,with two whichs,one which being ENTEROCOELE and the other which being MESOBLAST. Pardon me,I have skipped a jellyfish. Not Forgetting COELOMATA but of course they don't really count. Let us return to the fork,please. It is something to hang to,if you don't mind;and I do. On the first branch are hanging starfish,seacucumbers,fishes,frogs,birds,an opossum(how did he escape the NRA?)apes,and merely what men call men. On the

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second branch are hanging spiders,crabs(not what you think) bees,earthworms,clams,snails,and a squid. I am sure I have forgotten something. Never mind. And you don't. Whatatree whatatree.

"Owe loog" a scientifically spirited descendant of the sea-squirt,aetas 9 in its last shortpants,gulped(entirely jumping before my at the moment merely cephalopodic self & totally—for an unnatural nonce—Owening not only the dendronous mechanism in question but All Evolution Personified. "Disis" our eventuel concatenation of rotiferous animalcules triumphantly continued "howe LOIF biggun!"

"Ugh-huh" its oledur bruddur almost fatally hazarded

—that sir,is Miracle Spirit for you:and well worth the uprooting of a foliate & doubtless immemorial phobia re H_2O plus x(And How)alias seawater.

But if anything else were required,My Consort will be on the dock to greet you in case the Official Committee of Welcome am asleep

yours

gertrude steinie
let down her heinie
all on a summer's day
as it fell out
they all fell in
the rest they ran away

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January 7 [1935?]

[No salutation]

superruthianX transoceanic swat fabulously incinerates pilule pink As Cowards Sheer and blushful beholder's bereft borsalino bounds proudly from soi-disant brains(item who in serene glee suddenly stood on my head)paragraph

& so let's all begin next year all over again & let's all wake up on the wrong side of the right & turn on the raddyoh & so let's all get down on all fours & let's all become one big mitotic family & all grow together like two little cells or something & so let's all of us shut both our eyes wide and tight counting 1935 until I say BOOdle when you drop another five billion conundrums into Big Jim Farley's chaise percée because didn't Pollyanna the Glad cry "doles are degrading" or something or what?

Item now the Murrikin pippils are a Patient pippels so long as there's a Doctor in the house particularly when one of his feet happens to be all the way down their Alimentary Canal while his other hand is affectionately groping their Rectum Hesperorum.We-wee, I didn't raise my P.W.A. to be a C.C.C. is ein chic diastole if you've mastered the Longfellow or can step six rounds with a Thanatopsis,poisonally ah pif furs dat unmitigated monotony which is aptly occasioned by belatedly breathing on red combs through green toiletpaper(& they shot McKinley). Item the now one of two Broadway hits—"Thumbs Up" by John Murray Anderson—harbours an excellent frankly- antikikeanticommunist skit which frightens your welldressed audience almost to laughter (Did We Not Recognise Russia?Then Why Allow Such Travesties On The Stage?); you'd like even more however the even however less hoipolloi tapdancing of a very certain Paul Draper whose mere accent grave (not Ruth, Muriel) recently I am informed (via picturepostcard from Moscow)some succulent aspi&perspi-irrational crony It Won't Be Long Now before Wussia Wuns The Wurld

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owe, the petty of it paragraph. Jimmy(James)Light directed the then unknown O'Neill at MacdougalStreet's Provincetown Theatre which smelt like its formerly horses. Eleanor F. (Fitzie)Fitzgerald,a hothearted Irish nolongeryounggirl (who had nurtured her god Emma Goldman's A. Berkman & cordially outkicked the equally h.h. & I. police who arrived at her diggings to snatch him for anarchy during Ye War) insisted that Him be produced. Jimmy,I think he had vetoed the same,said oke & directed. Sibley the Watson put up le cash. It turned in that Him ran 45 minutes too long,horrifying all O'Neillists—whose idol had meantime moved uptown & was pouring thousands of $ into Ye Theatre Guild per Seerious Drahma beginning the afternoon before and ending the evening after; one ate, it is said, in the middle thereof. Jimmie took the book of Him to me;said:you cut what you think you can cut & I'll tell these pricks that's final. All NY "theatrecritics" puked except John Anderson(Hearst's Journal); Gilbert Seldes stood up on his toes & took a poke for art;crowds gathered;Him began "making money"—so Fitzie began paying the longdue backrent of the theatre so Watson put up de l'argent again. (Erin O'Brien Moore as Me). Paragraph. Years past. Light sweated(sic)over monneyworries by Night;his wife wrung sheets & painted a few but good pictures which almostnobody almostbought. Finally Hollywood. Two yirs passed. He returns, poor & a ghost;but a good ghost & Madame looks better than formerly even. "Gene"(O'N)now divorced,then married "Carlotta" hay hactress;inhabited France,hay shatoh;ordered on dit Moxie By The Case & on sait rit cosmic crab (Lizzierus Luffed). Time, present—James struggles with punks called "The Theatre Union" which produce Proletarian Melodramas at Eva(l'Aiglon) Legalliene's 14th Street Pippil's Tearter. (She moved back uptown). Fitzie is Unioning & a lot of exmacdougals & Jimmie is trying to sell them the idea of doing Coriolanus by making the crowd a Red Mob. Yes & do they like it? "Nothing" he said to me wistfully "is so conservative as a radical".

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My own father being perhaps America's earliest exponent of a(then preexisting) "science" called Economicosociologico, very am naturally ignorant;wherefore cordially second your timeless suggestion that condoms become currency. A night-watchman in a floristshop encouraged my hope of snow;adding—just as your correspondent was sailing forth to destroy all comfortstations & join the nearest Red Corner under mistaken Und Wie impression that Taste is not the Root of Aristocracy & vv—"IDDUD GIFFUH LODDUH GOYS WOIK"(meaning "iddud costtuh siddy $15,000"). Croyez-le ou non,cette neige n'est tombé qu'une fois et ça c'est pendant la nuit de '34–'35 while self was exploring Big Bad Bush-waws At Play meanwhile noting good friend Max Eastman ("art is communication")'s also Trotsky son*** (whom Marion & I'd brought because his father highly approved and the kid seemed sort of kind of lonesome etc.)steer straight for the only woman in the room who inherited thirteen millions ...dada. Ich glaube nel instinct

Air For Muted Dumbbells
by Kumrad Nyez Neyeoo
(author of Lenin's Lullaby or
day soitnly uhvengt Kirov)

here lies a national hero
(who goverened by fits and by starts)
framed(it was well below zero)
in a garland of petrified farts

"but my good man—how can I knock you down
if you don't stand up?"

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4 Patchin Place
January 29 [1935]

Dear Pound—
delighted to learn that you're casting your anchor and blowing newworldward!!!!!

as to hostelries:you'll probably have to pay more than you mentioned if you stop at,say,the Lafayette(or else be bathless): there are a few cheaper dumps in this vicinity but all somewhat dismal. Uptown,on the contrary,am told they're pleading for customers—whereof I know nothing.

It's been colder than socialism here. Maybe you'll bring us a real blizzard;so far we've enjoyed mere tempests. Dos Passos tells me that "Bob" Minor is (a)in New York and (b)irritable. The kumrads sound as if they'd folded. I recommend the Irving Place Burlesk(stripteasers in excelsis) & to hell with I.D.Ology.

—as usual

la signor(in)a sends congratulations to the seafarer. Let's know when

Lily Langtry & O.Henry
used to live at the Chelsea
Hotel—that's supposed to be
circa your price***

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Saint Valentine [1935?]

DEAR POUND—

I appreciate and approve of your reaction to the ER preface[4] and am profoundly glad this little pickaninny feels unworthy to convert any maneating missionaries

as 1 castration complex to another:"fuck" has been changed to "trick" in n e w [*New English Weekly*] today arriving with editor's compliments. This (said our hero with illdisguised restraint)settles the ? of Angleterre

I hear that No Thanks will occur in three editions (simultaneously)

(a)"holographic",modestly priced at $99.00 per copy; and consisting of 1 poem—"the boys i mean are not refined" but keep it under your hat—by me written with pen and ink

(b)&(c)successively less violently valued,and in which said poem is represented by its number and by a note referring the reader to said (a) and by much blank space

—also sub rosa—sub watch—sub ward

should a responsible (i.e.honest) European publisher wish to make shine while the hay suns,let him or her(i.e.not it) so state in writing to S.A.Jacobs,[5] 48 Charles Street,NewYork City, U.S.A. who's prepared to furnish what are aptly called sheets; thereby

(1)saving the itless considerable time & money

(2)insuring that both versions(native and foreign)are identical as to content

(3)eliminating 1,356,249 socalled typographical errors—since J. sets up every poem himself on his own machine & a cloud of witnesses not excluding your humble proofread all

but speaking of tickets & theatres I'd rather plant potatoes in a blind man's pocket than suffer a single trick,or even an asterisk, at the prehensile hands of those lousy limeies who are just so good no milkfed moron would trust their fifth cousins with a red hot stove he tactfully concluded,proving his opponent's point avec ees

—yours

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February [1935?]

[No salutation]
there, Mr P" Mr C said,tightening his vagina femoris by a not to say skillful adumbration of the trochanter major dexter(& with almost unequal pomposty flicking a horsebun off his left eyebrow)"we perceive the crux or gene of the matter." I too was at Bennington College, The Higher Education, meaning que les demoiselles—of all dimensions and costumes —sit around eachother's rooms quaffing applejack neat;to read for 45 minutes,for 25 $. 1 girlinmate observed dreamily "we had a behavior problem here..." "what" I suggested "is a behavior problem?" "Williams" she answered "college is only 47 miles away. One night some of the boys—they had been drinking—climbed into several 2ndstorey windows and were found kneeling beside the girls' beds..." "anything happen?" I inquire. "Well" she remembered dimly "the faculty" (whose function is to unexist except when a BP arises)"decided it had better install a nightwatchman..." "anything happen?" I almost whisper. Vaguely "well" she said, and almost hopelessly "he arrested the first man he found on the campus that night..." "Who was?" I venture. "The professor" she prettily murmured "of physics..." & as your correspondent entered ye lecture halle 200 maidens were chanting for the 3rd time a poem concerning Buffalo Bill—but what was the crux? something to do with one's deciding to appear in public before one's (nonpubic)hair had disappeared...—ah yes:vanity, sah!—there,Mr P" Mr C said, extracting a Woosevelt nickel from his armpit & carefully if not decorously laying same on the astonished herrober's tray plate or goingawaybasket "is the chromosome of the crisis." And with that he farted so suddenly as to extinguish a Swedish match held at some distance by a Lett named Doomer Fees who was momentaneously sitting in his Chinese laundryman's garretwindow at the redolent crossing of Eggshit and Cowpiss Avenues,Leningrad,duh brongz...

Bravo JoeGould—Esquire!! where isn't Das Gingrich?wrote twice but sans riposte[6]

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we,I received Active Flowerword[7] & it's the only "anthology" have liked (Profile excepted,if you wish);at Marion's suggestion I even intoned pp179–181(at aforedit Kneeling Academy; only to find,muchmuchmuch later, that meine hostess vas a kumrad—however;"sombreros")and especially enjoy pages

45 185–6 189–209

even made a visitor read&understand 185–6,not long ago. Paragraph. Your own poems which I most aime are absent.—Say isn't that a whale of a pp207–9 not that anything could top her

the lucid movements of the royal yacht upon the learned
scenery of Egypt
.....the shadows of the Alps
imprisoning in their folds,like flies in amber, the
rhythms of the skating rink

Thank you very much for both letters including the appreciated couplet & muchissimo re Notty [?] work at the crossroads. He & Jacobs seem already intercommunicado. My greetings to George R et I

a lady te salue

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snow,
March [1935?]
NY

NUNCLE
this is a brave night to cool a courtezan unquote

if it would give you any sort of a kick to see Eimi[8] published in Albion, go ahead—provided there are no(sic)alterations. Otherwise,good nuncle, absent thee from felicity unquote. Ditto re poems. Leer. Omelet.

I like very much your extremely flattering "thoroughbred"-"steamroller" metaphor(one of the fool's favorite toys, when he too was young,happened to be a "rollerengine" & at least two of his friends were Horses)

Marion having quote turned on her charm, G— departed with an article which he didn't seem much to care for & about 40 poems. Don't know whether;but he said that if I'd holdup publication of No Thanks for 15 days he'd kill unquote a page of Aiken,substituting for the corpse a selection from C plus a drawing(by C);I arranged my quote end of it.

O yesOyesOyesOyes

"I'm always interested in the mental coefficient" I said (speaking of maladies)"and suspect that every disease has a large one;if we could only understand it". That's the way we were goingon. "Well" G said "I had a malady for 7 years which didn't have any mental coefficient". We were goingon like that;quite illiterately. "Really" I said;and then he told me...for 7 years his face swelledunrecognizablyup at the most unexpected moments—the first seizure(italic mine)occurred shortly after his wife's baby had been born—G asked the doctor who'd delivered her what to do and the doc said put cold water on it and forget it—things got worse;prodigious pain, partial paralysis,etc.—final seizure on a train with his wife playing nurse & G practically non compos:she insisted he see another doctor—he did—2nd doc told G that the first doc's

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advice was "like telling a woman 'you're just a little pregnant; but don't pay any attention to it; nothing will happen'" (verbatim)so G had his tonsils out and is now "knocking on wood" & hoping for no more seizures. (His own words for what he said to doc one were these "I'm getting inflation—will I burst?")PS the pain had something to do with "sinus"

how would YOU like to edit a magazine unquote for 25 people with 4 ciphers always after them:see Freud;persecution, comma

more arrows to toi Sebastian mboi

v
s

SCIENCE

(just forwarded to me by a friend who is now in Hollywood)

"The encounter(of the earth with a commet)would probably not be harmless. A continent broken up, a kingdom crushed,Paris,London,New York or Pekin annihilated,would be one of the least effects of the celestial catastrophy. Such an event would evidently be of the highest interest to astronomers placed sufficiently far from the place of encounter... Such an encounter would then be eminently desirable from a purely scientific point of view;but we can scarcely hope for it, for we must admit,with Arago,that there are 280 millions to one against such an occurrence. However,although the probability against it is so great we need not entirely despair.

Popular Astronomy,by Camille Flammarion"

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April 4,1935

DEAR E.P.
yes,shall send you merci[9] hot off the Quoidonc. Respectfully prospectus hereby submitted(gratissimo)

Messer Gingrich bought,shortly after poems,a by moi versus-cranks article;at $150. (I only had to rewrite which & ain hoid uh woid sins). Re thy financial queery:Oinis is paid $450, on dit,for his monthly crap...pretty damn shitty—seeing as how another pugilist has just(on dit)been offered by your favorite perfidious Albion $250,000 plus 40% of any excess profit for one(1)go;which meer buggertail the latter(a hebe)is even rumored to be considering!!!NOW will you believe in the DEPRESSION?(ecco enclosure).[10]

Paragraph

I met Strawinsky today—it is not a stone,thank God;he is a rock

be good

Marion sends you her best

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SILVER LAKE, NEW HAMPSHIRE
October 3 '35

DEAR POUND—
haven't heard from yer honor in a number of epochs & am naturally suspicious:what with Roosevelt growing whichfully Boulder at Hoover dam & Robinson Crusoe translated into Basic for the benefit of marinated moujiks & social discredit goosing Father Coughlin in the Alberta & the Quintuplets still taking nourishment & Lawrence puking posthumously all over his Doubleday Doran & Mussolini busily barking up the woebegone arsehole of Solomon! Sure an' 'tis a fine hoblate horange yer cronie Joymes Jace has uprightly decided to walk blindly upon. All the more cause,I'm thinkin', for a couple o'dizzily undelapidated & otherwise prematurely noncrepuscular correspondents like our blessed selves to hark forwardly backward into the pettifoggering salaami o' the ringstrakers & to cry cop fer a Mann named fer instance Thomas

"For distance in a straight line has no mystery. The mystery is in the sphere. But the sphere consists in correspondence" —what was I atellin' you—"and redintegration"—a translator's word, to be unsure—"; it is a doubled half that becomes one, that is made by joining an upper and a lower half, a heavenly and an earthly hemisphere, which complement each other in a whole, in such a manner that what is above is also below;and what happens in the earthly repeats itself in the heavenly sphere and contrariwise. This complementary exchange of two halves which together form a closed sphere is equivalent to actual change—that is, revolution. The sphere rolls—that lies in the nature of spheres. Bottom is soon top and top bottom, in so far as one can speak of top and bottom in such a connection. Not only do the heavenly and the earthly recognise themselves in each other,but, thanks to the revolution of the sphere,the heavenly can turn into the earthly, the earthly into the heavenly,from which it is clear that gods can become men and on the other hand men can become gods again." (Joseph And His Brothers, page 205–6,Knopf publisher)

compare Gaudier [–Brzeska].

Come come, me fine boyo quoth the flyder to the spi:haul

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up yer catgut out o' the pretty pond o' putrid politics & bait a strong rope with all o' yourself & jump you out right inwardly at the Isful ubiquitous wasless&shallbeless quote scrotumtightening unquote omnivorously eternal thalassa pelagos or Ocean

And just to prove there is nothing provable or I'm not joking,shall be sending you (in the was of an aeon or twain unless it's tomorrow-come-yesterday)one book of a ballet[11] which nobody here will produce by the oozing artichoke of impassioned ishtar

—be good!

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[1937?]

only come in Spring
e.g. when you feel
i. e. don't auden your spender for any agent procurateur

item "the more you shall ask, the more they will want" (Karl [Marx?])
idem "stick to your guns, doughboy!" (General Marx)

re my error ("art is communication")
remember that all "political minded" people, including women
are simple people
" " " simple people think
" " " " " " that they are
" " " " " " " " " honest
which means nothing, which doesn't mean that they would
trust you (or even me) with a red hot stove

When Count Keyserling toured America, a statement was
forwarded to all concerned, telling exactly what & whom he liked to
eat drink & leigh, advising of the minutest details—
including laundry—& otherwise informing this country
that somebody had arrived. That's how you should be
handled kid & don't forget it

Marion is trying to get you better terms via some

livelier publishing bureau. I'll write or wire
if anything turns ↑
Sois sage

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4 Patchin Place
Thursday [1939]

Dear Yank
we returned last Sunday;since when(your warship being at sea)the enclosed envelope[12] has roosted on our door,waiting to crow. Much as I mostly loathe all joiners gettogetherers civilizationsavers and friendsofwaterclosets, more am glad that Ezra Pound has met the only living American young composer***
we still wake up circa noon and still fall asleep toward dawn and still want to hear about a certain district known but not loved as of Columbia so why not 'phone GR 7–3919 beginning Saturday if you're still possessed of the twentieth part of a fin.

Marion sends her best

—high

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treize mai [1940?]

DEAR EZRA—
have done what less I could to more your most generosity around little joe [Gould]. Eg wrote Can(unquote)by;pas d'answer. Then a pleasant ba from Stephen Rose Benêt, at whom had officially been referred my naked suggestion, claiming ignorance of & curiosity re j g :replied phenomenon vide CPs twosixtyone[13] must however be viewed to be perceived, gave its address. Coached Joe,which expressed willingness sans astonishment con skepticism but(to undersigned's delight)announced Steve was "up my alley" apparently via John Brown's body a certainly bookofthemonthclub selection probably for years ago. Ye candidate once depuis materialized;there'd come no word from fame

Marion and I've glimpsed intermittently that steady admirer of your warship named Fox.[14] A sort of tortoise, I like them. Full of kangaroo. Beaucoup freundlich
also rabbits. John Reed. Popped en route to Canada. You saved his mangled life. You did a good job

high see can't casts no shadow itler & itler

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4 Patchin Place
F. 1941

Dear Ezra—
your 14 Nov. (adorned with six Pegasus
& 1 settingupexercise)[15] greeting crashed
Patchin on Monday December nine.
To Hell with subrosa & entrement sororities
or fraternities, very particularly the pythian
orders of moose. When callow thou hast
attained my humble servant's Experience,
all thesey thosey gettogetherys merely mean
goosing one's self into a plentifully perforated
brownpaperbag, the worser to swim winedark
Hellesponts inc.

now something different's a fellow gets word
to pay 250$ or hear a jailsentence or fulfill
his jury—"duty" (which he's already succeeded
in dodging once)—the poor guy "serves". At
least I did. And that's a distant wail from
muttering thankyouplease to the Karl Wheeler
Markam chair of contaminated desuetude
in Archibald Benèt's parlor de burys

swam at "Times Square" last "election eve" to
watch me lose 15 berries re W. W. [Wendell Willkie],
having (alsoto please my family) once voted for the gent
with artificial teeth that fell asleep president
& awaked Hughes. Mob = 42nd–48th.
3(three) its looked as if they were trying not
to be blown by horns: otherwise nothing
did everyone whatever at all.

Jim Angleton[16] has been seemingly got hold of
by an intelligent prof & apparently begins to
begin to realise that camp mil ser might
give the former a respite from poisonal

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responsibility... maybe he's developing?
Per contra: last summer Ted Spencer dropped
up with two dubs, one the farflung Bessin
Ganzesse yclept Laughlin; which mistakenly
afterward wrote addressing me as "immoral
and rustic bard"—who promptly announced
"what I need is a thousand dollars and when
I need it is now"; celui-là muy languidly
replies that so would everybody including
him like a thousand dollars. Light house
Robbie was correct.

The full is so world of a thing full of numbs,
& all we should think be as finger as thumbs.

Beside "Treasure Island" I put "Lorna Doone"
Spring is coming. Two penguins salute you
from our mantlepiece. The lady sends
love & the elephant wishes bonne chance

P S and right soon

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October 8, 1941

DEAR EZRA—

whole, round, and heartiest greetings from the princess & me to our favorite Ikey-Kikey, Wandering Jew, Quo Vadis, Oppressed Minority Of one, Misunderstood Master, Mister Lonelyheart, and Man Without A Country

re whose latest queeries

East Maxman has gone off on a c-nd-m in a pamphlet arguing everybody should support Wussia, for the nonce. "Time"(a loose) mag says Don Josh Bathos of London England told P.E.N. innulluxuls that for the nonce writers shouldn't be writing. Each collective choisi(pastparticiple, you recall,of choisir)without exception and—may I add—very naturally desires for the nonce nothing but Adolph's Absolute Annihilation, Coûte Que Coûte (SIC). A man who once became worshipped of one thousand million pibbul by not falling into the ocean while simultaneously peeping through a periscope and sucking drugstore sandwiches is excoriated for,for the nonce,freedom of speech. Perfectly versus the macarchibald maclapdog macleash—one(1)poet,John Peale Bishop, holds a nonce of a USGov't job;vide ye newe Rockyfeller-sponsored ultrarumpus to boost SA infrarelations. Paragraph and your excoed Billy The Medico made a far from noncelike W.C. of himself(per a puddle of a periodical called "Decision")relating how his poor pal E.P. = talented etc but ignorant ass who etc can't play the etc piano etc... over which tour d'argent the wily Scotch duckfuggur Peter Munro Jack 5 Charles Street NYCity waxed so wroth he hurled at me into New Hampshire a nutn if not incandescing wire beginning "stab a man in the back but do it three years too late":'twould hence appear you've still some friends, uncle Ezra,whether vi piace or non

now to descend to the surface;or, concerning oldfashioned i: every whatsoever bully (e.g. all honourless & lazy punks twerps thugs slobs politicos parlourpimps murderers and other reformers continues impressing me as a trifle more isn't than

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least can less and the later it's Itler the sooner hit's Ess. Tune: The Gutters Of Chicago

"make haste" spake the Lord Of New Dealings
"neutrality's hard on my feelings"
—they returned from the bank
with the furter in frank:
& the walls;& the floors,& the ceilings)

As my father wrote me when I disgraced Orne[17]—forsan et haec. And the censor let those six words through

hardy is as hardy does

—salut!

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SILVER LAKE, NEW HAMPSHIRE
June 25 '52

DEAR EP—
'twas good to hearseehug you

now that am collecting my(scattered in ny-va-wash-ny-bost-NH transit)selves,let me kindly thank the author of epistle to the human fly for generous greetings, excellent counsel,& instructive MaxB(enclosed)enclosure[18]

shall keep an eye peeled for Thetis' boychild,dodge Yandellic "confluence"[19],& probably pluckupcourage to cherchez la Beatrix [Beatrice Abbott]

you may be pleased to learn that in his traduction of thy friend's Commedia Dr CharlesEliotNorton throws this footnote at Par viii 116 (Per l'uomo in terra se non fosse cive?)"For the fact is evident that man is by nature a social animal,and cannot attain his true end except as a member of a community"

quand a l'undersigned,everything(at least in my less misguided moments)becomes luckily not what but who

—Marion sends love!

saw a silent bluejay l'autre jour;he sends you his swoopingest

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6 Wyman Road
Cambridge, Massachusetts
October 24 1952

[No salutation]
& right ye were,Ezree meee by,to communicate the Williamsiana[20];which arrived this day,forwarded from nh:& gladdened my spouse&self

now this dame "Cummins" has(as you doubtless know) been after eec for yarz;so am selfishly-delighted she's attacking someone else(poor shawn shay)

but regret to learn our laymyspiritatherfeetfull acquaintance has injured his Amongmanyothers, undistinguished cote(with a circumflex). What was he up or down or sideways or neither to,pray?

am in good hands here,belonging to 1 "John Finley"[21]; professing Greek,extolling Humanities,&(tactfully not when I'm around;however)praising O'Possumtotheskies. A nice—the JF—fellow. Has already preserved me from well nigh not numerable "social" phenomena:& (this in thine oreille)will,j'espère,make possible a big escape to ny circa Xmas!

we live in a little house,far from seive lies ation; & a big BLUEJAY seems to be our chief mascot—a stalwart rascal,whose Hue give me Joy unmitigated;& who fears no crow or gull extant. I've already remembered him to you

Marion sends love to yourself & Dorothy! Please keep many fingers crossed(on my nonworthy bewhole)from 8 to 9 PM this coming Tuesday,28th October;my 1st "Norton lecture"
—oop thih rubbles

L'ENFANT PRODIGUE

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6 Wyman Road
Cambridge 38;Massachusetts
February 9 '53

Dear Ezra—
if by chance I understand your latest(to Marion)
favor's preemeer paragraph,it emanates at least
gross misrepresentation. Master Mullins'[22] most
recent appearance coincided with the presence of
a singularly honest Greek sculptor [Michael Lekakis]
to whom he(Mullins)
originally introduced us;plus a Greek poet,friend
of le dit sculptor,who emitted more aliveness per
cubic moment than a dozen thousand million Mullinss
would during several linear centuries. Moreover
said Mullins brought along a not invited demiyouth
which kept its eyes open but couldn't say boo

as for "a GOOD poEM",our unhero modestly declines
what Doubtless Thomas once pontifically entitled
the gambit. Neither does "Blackstone" [R. P. Blackmur?]
cause requisite
thrills hereabouts;though he well may amid "the
healthy young"(whoever they aren't). But re your
"aint steerable" tribute anent myself,I thank you
heartily:& hope to prove worthy thereof ad infin

our bluejay sends love

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SILVER LAKE NEW HAMPSHIRE
June 24 1954

MULTITUDINOUS MONOLITH—
bonjour!

am more than happy to hear from your sundrily
divers selves,& kindestly thank whom-or-which
for their most gracious invitation to sputter
freely in linguadante.[23] How any mere mortal
may im-or-possibly conceive 50(let alone 500)
paroles anent some at least 5thrate political
whorehouse while battling (1)prehistoric floods
followed by a millenial heatwave (2)a prodigious
pest of actually omnivorous(they eat even the
pineneedles)caterpillars & (3)a gory galaxy of
blockbusting mosquitoes plus brutally bloodying
blackflies plusorminus aptly entitled via the
vernacular "no-see-'ems"(smaller than a pinpoint
but with a burn like a whitehot needle)remains
a shallwesay ponderable question. Meantime
please rest assured that this infrahero won't
willingly accept publication per The socalled
New Yorker—I politely refused to send them
poems long ago—albeit(to give the D his d)one
Mr(now departed)Ross certainly did instigate
organize & achieve a civic superservice not to
mention ultraconstructive reform consisting of
the total removal from NewYorkCity's GrandCentral
station of a mis(by nobody-unless-yourself-knows-
whom)begotten concatention of hideous deafening
& otherwise entirely demoralizing hypergigantic
talkie(sic)advertisements

e'er quitting sieveliesashun,Marionetmoi dined
munificently chez Useless Mullins;who inhabits
a towering eastside slumskyscraper which has many
more stairs tobeclimbed than BunkerHillMonument
but oddly enough is worth the ennui(aside from

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Eustace Muggings louis-maim). A charming fellow-
mortal:whose epitaph re thyself makes(in my humble
opinion)him already deathless

well now about DEBT[24] unquote,I overtly admit that
the only debts harbouring some slightest interest
for the sioux seen yea are those of a purely
personal nature ie which can never be paid

—hoping
you are secretly the same;& with great love
from the Lady!

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4 Patchin Place
January 22 '55

Dear Ez—
if am not most grossly mistaken,'twas
David called Thoreau observed he had
never met—or hoped to meet—a man worse
than himself

talents differ:if heroical thine be cursing
swine & ringing nex,our tolerant unhero
may only re-remark(vide 6 nonlectures page
70)that "hatred bounces"

item— 1 Sam XVII—something informs me
that Joy is the name of a brook from which
(as the adult hyperogre of philistinism
superstrutted)a mere child chose him five
smooth stones

—Marion sends love!

NOTES

[1] Joseph Ferdinand Gould (1889–1957), famous Greenwich Village character, author, so he claimed, of the *Oral History of the World.*

[2] Cummings refers, apparently, to his play *Him*, published by Boni & Liveright in 1927.

[3] *CIOPW* (New York, 1931): book of pictures by Cummings in Charcoal, Ink, Oil, Pastel, and Watercolor.

[4] Cummings' preface written for the Modern Library edition of *The Enormous Room* (New York, 1934).

[5] S. A. Jacobs, the printer to whom Cummings entrusted the difficult job of setting up, by hand, certain volumes of his writings.

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[6] Arnold Gingrich, publisher and editor of *Esquire*, was interested in publishing a portion of Gould's *Oral History*.

[7] *Active Anthology*, ed. Ezra Pound (London, 1933).

[8] *Eimi* (New York, 1933) is Cummings' account of his trip to the Soviet Union.

[9] "merci" refers to *No Thanks* (Mount Vernon, New York, 1935).

[10] Enclosure missing.

[11] *Tom* (New York, 1935).

[12] Enclosure missing.

[13] An address in New York, Central Park South, presumably that of Stephen Vincent Benét.

[14] Douglas Fox, who with Leo Frobenius explored African and Australian cave paintings.

[15] Refers to the Italian stamps on Pound's envelope: six with representations of Pegasus, one with a Winged Victory (the "settingup-exercise").

[16] James Angleton, former editor of *Furioso*, was at the time of the letter stationed at a military camp, the name of which Cummings transliterates as "camp mil ser."

[17] District of France in which was located the prison where Cummings had been confined in 1917 (See *The Enormous Room*).

[18] Enclosure missing.

[19] William Yandell Elliot edited at Harvard a magazine called *Confluence*.

[20] A clipping from the *Washington Times Herald*, dated October 20, 1952, reporting an attack by a certain Virginia Kent Cummins on the Library of Congress for having appointed William Carlos Williams consultant in poetry. Williams' verse, Mrs. Cummins said, was "the very voice of Communism."

[21] Professor of Classics at Harvard, where Cummings in 1952–53 delivered the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures (published as *i:6 Nonlectures* [Harvard University Press, 1953]).

[22] Eustace Mullins, author of *This Difficult Individual, Ezra Pound* (New York, 1961).

[23] Pound relayed to Cummings an invitation to write 500 words on the state of the U.S.A. for an Italian periodical. Cummings refused.

[24] Pound had written "can you conceive of any greater degree of imbecility than that of a man who cannot recognize the difference between interest-bearing & non-interest-bearing debt?" Marion Cummings informs us that "as C. had no debts—had in fact a horror of debts, this didn't bother him."

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As Your Eyes Are Blue

As your eyes are blue
you move me—& the thought of you—
I imitate you.
& cities apart. yet a roof grey with slates
or lead. the difference is little.
& even you could say as much
through a foxtail of pain even you

when the river beneath your window
was as much as I dream of. loose change &
your shirt on the top of a chest-of-drawers.
a mirror facing the ceiling & the light in a cupboard
left to burn all day a dull yellow
probing the shadowy room "what was it?"

"cancel the tickets"—a sleep talk
whose horrors razor a truth that can
walk with equal calm through palace rooms
chandeliers tinkling in the silence as winds batter the gardens
outside formal lakes shuddering at the sight
of 2 lone walkers
  of course this exaggerates
small groups of tourists appear & disappear
in an irregular rhythm of flowerbeds

you know even in the stillness of my kiss
that doors are opening in another apartment
on the other side of town a shepherd grazing
his sheep through a village we know
high in the mountains the ski slopes thick with summer flowers
& the water-meadows below with narcissi
the back of your hand &—

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a newly designed red bus drives quietly down Gower Street
a brilliant red "how could I tell you..."
with such confusion
meetings disintegrating
& a general lack of purpose only too obvious
in the affairs of state
"yes, it was on a hot july day
with taxis gunning their motors on the throughway
a listless silence in the backrooms of paris bookshops
why bother one thing equal to another

dinner parties whose grandeur stops all conversation

but
the afternoon sunlight which shone in
your eyes as you lay beside me watching for...—
we can neither remember—still shines as you
wait nervously by the window for the ordered taxi
to arrive if only I could touch your naked shoulder
now "but then..."

and the radio still playing the same
records I heard earlier today
—& still you move me
& the distance is nothing
"even you...

—LEE HARWOOD
London, October 11–21, 1965

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Brother

for Georg Trakl

1

Three is to recapture isolation's ease among the adolescents,
Slim curved and tortured body of Mississippi.
One finds sarcastic zealous presidents
Lear debriefing his daughters:
How can I use you three (in the electric age)?
The oil thermometer of a fan
Jetting its purple spunk among the persian lambs
(On this used body).
The politics of secession say
Change to an invisible program
A maze of retribution
Three fingers to a hand
And the frost of its graveyard logs.

2

These hands hide my face
in a sky made furnace.

My fists open
before a despised face.

Defeated by so many,
the world is hungry.

Oh snow, refusing to be
moulded by childish hands

"Oh my brother we climb
blind hands, to midnight."

—DAVID SHAPIRO

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Florence Was Fine in the Summertime

On this day, anno 1966
The thin Scandinavian girl whose fine-nosed
white collie sniffs along the shaded walk.
Those girls wear secret pictures on their stomachs
of secretive boys.
But what does all this secretion come to? She can strain
Her mind, very, very hard. (Age also creates problems. You think
All this is time for nothing? For nothing the bridges, the
churches and whatnot?)

A true problem is easy, too easy to have to shrug it off. . .

Dirty mirrors, dirty hysterical pastimes
Behind the closed door a demi-monde
Of our eyes, our most virile dream.

But shrugging it off is too easy, too. We must come to accept
The difficulty there is in the problems there are.
Like the pleasures one plays down
in the field, and that one is proud of:

After all, children furnish us with the meadow we loll on;
But they're playing on it, too. No, nothing
Is as exciting as the sun-dried ankle of a child
As she trips up a beach, sand in her hair
And the obdurate, grainy sloth in her eyes.

—MICHAEL BROWNSTEIN

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Tobias:

(Recollection) The cat that I had.

Agnes (~~Someone~~):

Hm?

Tobias:

The cat that I had....when I was --well, a year or so before I met you. She was very old: I'd had her since I was very young; she must have been fifteen, or more. An alley cat. She didn't like people very much, I think; at least she'd ....absent herself. She wouldn't run, or hide; she wasn't skittish, or, or hysterical. When people came....she'd....pick up and walk away. She liked me: or, rather, when I was alone with her I could see she was content: she'd sit on my lap, or near me, or on the basin when I shaved, or sleep on my clothes if I left them somewhere. She was....content, I guess; I don't know if she was happy, but she was content. We'd not had other animals --my family and I'd taken her to college with me, and into the city, and she was....well, as much a fixture as....my good gold watch, my favorite bathrobe. She was there. We didn't play, you understand: she was getting on, and she'd never been....frisky --like some-- and half the time I doubt I knew she was around --consciously. It was her absence I would have noticed. And I liked her very mu

Agnes (~~Someone~~):

Yes.

Tobias:

And how the thing happened I don't really know. She....one day she....well, one day I realized she no longer liked me. No, that's not right: one day I realized she must have stopped liking me some time before. I was very busy --very social, I guess, away weekends, nights out, parties where I lived, lots of people in....I spent less time alone; I used my place less than I just lived in it. But one evening I was alone, home, and I was suddenly aware of her absence, not just that she wasn't in the room with me, but that she hadn't been,

---

Manuscript page from *A Delicate Balance*.

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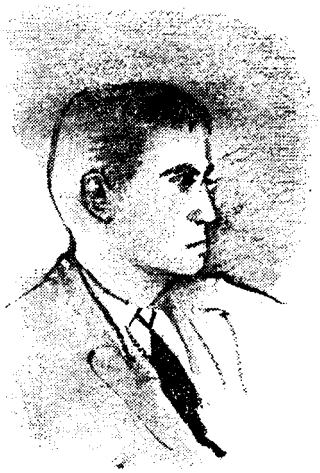

Edward Albee

An Interview

The interview happened on a scalding, soggy-aired Fourth of July in a sunny room in Albee's small, attractive country house in Montauk, Long Island. Keeping in mind his luxuriously appointed house in New York City's Greenwich Village, the country place is dramatically modest by comparison. With the exception of a handsome, newly-built tennis court (in which the playwright takes a disarmingly childlike pleasure and pride), and an incongruously grand Henry Moore sculpture situated high on a landscaped terrace that commands a startling view of the sea, the simplicity of the place leaves one with the curious impression that the news of the personal wealth his work has brought him has not quite reached the playwright-in-residence at Montauk. Still, it is in his country house that he generally seems most at ease, natural, at home.

Albee was dressed with a mildly ungroomed informality. He was as yet unshaven for the day and his neo-Edwardian haircut was damply askew. He appeared, as the climate of the afternoon demanded, somewhat uncomfortable.

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The interviewer and subject have been both friends and composer-writer collaborators for about eighteen years. But Albee's barbed, poised, and elegantly guarded public press style took over after the phrasing of the first question— though perhaps it was intermittently penetrated during the course of the talk.

INTERVIEWER

One of your most recent plays was an adaptation of James Purdy's novel *Malcolm*. It had as close to 100 percent bad notices as a play could get. The resultant commercial catastrophe and quick closing of the play apart, how does this affect your own feeling about the piece itself?

ALBEE

I see you're starting with the hits. Well, I retain for all my plays, I suppose, a certain amount of enthusiasm. I don't feel intimidated either by the unanimously bad press that *Malcolm* got, or the unanimously good press that some of the other plays have received. I haven't changed my feeling about *Malcolm*. I liked doing the adaptation of Purdy's book. I had a number of quarrels with the production, but then I usually end up with quarrels about all of my plays. With the possible exception of the little play *The Sandbox*, which takes thirteen minutes to perform, I don't think anything I've done has worked out to perfection.

INTERVIEWER

While it doesn't necessarily change your feeling, does the unanimously bad critical response open questions in your mind?

ALBEE

I imagine that if we had a college of criticism in this country whose opinions more closely approximated the value of the works of art inspected, it might; but as often as not, I find relatively little relationship between the work of art and the immediate critical response it gets. Every writer's got to pay some attention, I suppose, to what his critics say because theirs is a reflection of what the audience feels about his work. And

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a playwright, especially a playwright whose work deals very directly with an audience, perhaps he should pay some attention to the nature of the audience-response—not necessarily to learn anything about his craft, but as often as not merely to find out about the temper of the time, what is being tolerated, what is being permitted.

INTERVIEWER

Regarding adaptations in general, can you think of any by American playwrights that you admire at all?

ALBEE

No, I can't think of any that I admire. I've done adaptations for two reasons; first, to examine the entire problem of adaptation—to see what it felt like; and second, because I admired those two books—*The Ballad of the Sad Cafe* and *Malcolm*—very much and thought they belonged on the stage; I wanted to see them on the stage, and felt more confident, perhaps incorrectly, in my own ability to put them on the stage than in most adaptors'.

INTERVIEWER

One of the local reviewers, after *Malcolm* came out, referred to it as Edward Albee's "play of the year," rather as if to suggest that this is a conscious goal you've set for yourself, to have a play ready every year.

ALBEE

Do you remember the Thurber cartoon of the man looking at his police dog and saying, "If you're a police dog, where's your badge?" It's the function of a playwright to write. Some playwrights write a large number of plays, some write a small number. I don't set out to write a play a year. Sometimes, I've written two plays a year. There was a period of a year and a half when I only wrote half a play. If it depresses some critics that I seem prolific, well, that's their problem as much as mine. There's always the danger that there are so damn

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many things that a playwright can examine in this society of ours—things that have less to do with his artistic work than have to do with the critical and aesthetic environment—that perhaps he does have to worry about whether or not he is writing too fast. But then also, perhaps he should worry about getting as many plays on as possible before the inevitable ax falls.

INTERVIEWER

What do you mean by the inevitable ax?

ALBEE

If you examine the history of any playwright of the past twenty-five or thirty years—I'm not talking about the comedy boys, I'm talking about the more serious writers—it seems inevitable that almost everyone has been encouraged until the critics feel that they have built them up beyond the point where they can control them; then it's time to knock them down again. And a rather ugly thing starts happening: the playwright finds himself knocked down for works that quite often are just as good or better than the works he's been praised for previously. And a lot of playwrights become confused by this and they start doing imitations of what they've done before, or they try to do something entirely different, in which case they get accused by the same critics of not doing what they *used* to do so well.

INTERVIEWER

So, it's a matter of not being able to win either way.

ALBEE

Actually, the final evaluation of a play has nothing to do with immediate audience or critical response. The playwright, along with any writer, composer, painter in this society, has got to have a terribly private view of his own value, of his own work. He's got to listen to his own voice primarily. He's got to watch out for fads, for what might be called the critical aesthetics.

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INTERVIEWER

Why do you think the reviews were so lacerating against *Malcolm*—a play that might simply have been dismissed as not being very good.

ALBEE

It seemed to me the critics loathed something. Now whether they loathed something above and beyond the play itself, it's rather dangerous for me to say. I think it's for the critics to decide whether or not their loathing of the play is based on something other than the play's merits or demerits. They must search their own souls, or whatever.

INTERVIEWER

When you say that the play was badly produced—

ALBEE

I didn't like the way it was directed particularly. It was the one play of mine—of all of them—that got completely out of my hands. I let the director take over and dictate the way things should be done. I did it as an experiment.

INTERVIEWER

What do you mean as an experiment?

ALBEE

As a playwright, one has to make the experiment finally to see whether there's anything in this notion that a director can contribute creatively, as opposed to interpretively.

INTERVIEWER

Do you believe that a director has any creative vitality of his own?

ALBEE

Well, that's a very "iffy" question, as President Roosevelt used to say. I imagine as an axiom you could say that the better the play the less "creativity" the director need exert.

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INTERVIEWER

Have you ever had the experience of finding out that the director's way was a certain enlightenment?

ALBEE

I can't answer that honestly, because something very curious happens. In rehearsals I get so completely wrapped up with the reality that's occurring on stage that by the time the play has opened I'm not usually quite as aware of the distinctions between what I'd intended and the result. There are many ways of getting the same result.

INTERVIEWER

Well, you talk about keeping complete control of your plays. Let's say that you'd envisioned in your own mind a certain scene being done a certain way.

ALBEE

I'm not terribly concerned about which characters are standing on the right-hand side of the stage.

INTERVIEWER

That's not the point I'm trying to make. In the preparation of the early Kazan-Williams successes, Williams was in constant conflict with Kazan, and yet Kazan would come up with the one thing that would finally make the play work.

ALBEE

Do we know that it was better than Williams' original idea?

INTERVIEWER

According to his own alleged view of it, yes.

ALBEE

Some writers' view of things depends upon the success of the final result. I'd rather stand or fall on my own concepts. But there is a fine line to be drawn between pointing up some-

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thing or distorting it. And one has always got to be terribly careful, since the theater is made up of a whole bunch of prima donnas, not to let the distortions occur. I've seen an awful lot of plays that I'd read before they were put into production and been shocked by what's happened to them. In the attempt to make them straightforward and commercially successful, a lot of things go out the window. I'm just saying that in the theater, which is a sort of jungle, one does have to be a little bit careful. One mustn't be so rigid or egotistical to think that every comma is sacrosanct. But at the same time there is the danger of losing control and finding that somebody else has opened a play and not you.

INTERVIEWER

Why did you decide to become a playwright? You wrote poems without notable success, and then suddenly decided to write a play, *The Zoo Story*.

ALBEE

Well, when I was six years old I decided not that I was *going* to be, but with my usual modesty, that I *was* a writer. So I started writing poetry when I was six and stopped when I was twenty-six because it was getting a little better, but not terribly much. When I was fifteen I wrote 700 pages of an incredibly bad novel—it's a very funny book I still like a lot. Then, when I was nineteen I wrote a couple hundred pages of another novel, which wasn't very good either. I was still determined to be a writer. And since I was a writer, and here I was twenty-nine years old and I wasn't a very good poet and I wasn't a very good novelist, I thought I would try writing a play, which seems to have worked out a little better.

INTERVIEWER

With regard to *Zoo Story*—was its skill and power and subsequent success a surprise and revelation to you?

ALBEE

A lot interests me—but nothing surprises me particularly. Not that I took it for granted that it was going to be skillful

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and powerful. I'm not making any judgment about the excellence or lack of it in the play. But it did not come as a *surprise* to me that I'd written it. You must remember I've been watching and listening to a great number of people for a long time. Absorbing things, I suppose. My only reaction was, "Aha! So this is the way it's going to be, is it?" That was my reaction.

INTERVIEWER

The biggest news about you at the moment, I expect, would be the success of the film *Virginia Woolf*. The Production Code approval came hard, but apparently you approved of it yourself.

ALBEE

When the play was sold to the movies I was rather apprehensive of what would happen. I assumed they would put Doris Day in it, and maybe Rock Hudson. And I was even a little apprehensive about the actual casting. Especially Elizabeth Taylor. I wasn't apprehensive about the idea of Richard Burton being in the film, but it did seem to be a little odd that Elizabeth Taylor, who is in her early thirties, would be playing a fifty-two-year-old woman.

INTERVIEWER

At one time you were apprehensive about Mike Nichols, the director.

ALBEE

I was curious as to why they chose a man who'd never made a film before and had made his reputation directing farces on Broadway, why they chose *him* as a director to turn a serious play into a movie. I think I learned the answer: being innocent to the medium he doesn't know how to make the usual mistakes. I had a number of other reasons for apprehension. One always knows what is done to a script when it goes to Hollywood. When I saw the film in Hollywood about two or three months before it was released, I was star-

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tled, and enormously taken with the picture, partially through relief I imagine. But more than that, I discovered that no screenplay had been written, that the play was there almost word for word. A few cuts here and there. A few oversimplifications.

INTERVIEWER

Oversimplifications?

ALBEE

Yes, I'll go into those in a minute. Ernest Lehman, who is credited with the screenplay, did write about twenty-five words. I thought they were absolutely terrible. So really there wasn't a screenplay, and that delighted me. It was a third of the battle, as far as I was concerned. So that was my first delight—that the play was photographed word for word. I'm not saying it was photographed action for action. The camera didn't stay thirty-five feet from the actors and it wasn't done in one set, it moved around a good deal. It behaves and acts very much like a film. In fact, it *is* a film. There are some shots, close-ups, lots of things you can't do on the stage. Then my second delight, after finding that the play was intact, was to appreciate that the director, Mike Nichols, understood not only the play, my intentions (pretty much, again with a couple of oversimplifications), but also seemed to understand the use of the camera and the film medium, all this in his first time around. Third, I was happy that Elizabeth Taylor was quite capable of casting off the beautiful young woman image and doing something much more than she usually does in films. And the rest of the cast was more or less fine too, Dennis and Segal. I have a few quarrels with their interpretations, but they're so minor compared to what could have happened. I found that it made an awfully good picture.

INTERVIEWER

The play as a film seems to be generally better understood by film reviewers than it was by drama critics. Is it possible

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that these oversimplifications you're talking about, that you blame Mike Nichols for, or somebody, are responsible for the fact that the play comes over more clearly?

ALBEE

I suppose if you simplify things, it's going to make it easier to understand. But without placing blame, I'd say there *was* an oversimplification, which I regret to a certain extent. For example, whenever something occurs in the play on both an emotional and intellectual level, I find in the film that only the emotional aspect shows through. The intellectual underpinning isn't as clear. In the film I found that in the love-hate games that George and Martha play, their intellectual enjoyment of each other's prowess doesn't show through anywhere nearly as strongly as it did in the play. Quite often, and I suppose in most of my plays, people are doing things on two or three levels at the same time. From time to time in the movie of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* I found that a level or two had vanished. At the end of the film, for example, with the revelation about the non-existent child and its destruction, the intellectual importance of the fiction isn't made quite as clearly as it could be. In the film it's nowhere near as important as the *emotional* importance to the characters. In my view, the two of them have got to go hand in hand. But this is quibbling, you see. It's a really very good film. There are a few things that I wish hadn't happened—that enormous error in accepting somebody's stupid idea of taking the action away from the house to the roadhouse. That's the one area of the film where somebody decided to broaden it out for film terms. Yet it was the one part of the film, curiously enough, that all the film critics thought was the most stagey.

INTERVIEWER

Incidentally, when did the title "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" occur to you?

ALBEE

There was a saloon—it's changed its name now—on 10th

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Street, between Greenwich Avenue and Waverly Place, that was called something at one time, now called something else, and they had a big mirror on the downstairs bar in this saloon where people used to scrawl graffiti. At one point back in about 1953, 1954 I think it was—long before any of us started doing much of anything—I was in there having a beer one night, and I saw "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" scrawled in soap, I suppose, on this mirror. When I started to write the play it cropped up in my mind again. And of course, who's afraid of Virginia Woolf means who's afraid of the big *bad* wolf... who's afraid of living life without false illusions. And it did strike me as being a rather typical university, intellectual joke.

INTERVIEWER

With the filming of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, the oft-repeated evaluation of it as a play about four homosexuals who are, for the sake of convention, disguised as heterosexuals recurs. I cannot recall any public statement or comment being made by you on this interpretation of the play.

ALBEE

Indeed it is true that a number of the movie critics of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* have repeated the speculation that the play was written about four homosexuals disguised as heterosexual men and women. This comment first appeared around the time the play was produced. I was fascinated by it. I suppose what disturbed me about it was twofold: first, nobody has ever bothered to ask *me* whether it was true; second, the critics and columnists made no attempt to document the assertion from the text of the play. The facts are simple: *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was written about two heterosexual couples. If I had wanted to write a play about four homosexuals, I would have done so. Parenthetically, it is interesting that when the film critic of *Newsweek* stated that he understood the play to have been written about four homosexuals, I had a letter written to him suggesting he check his information before printing such speculations. He replied, saying, in

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effect, two things: first, that we all know that a critic is a far better judge of an author's intention than the author; second, that seeing the play as being about four homosexuals was the only way that he could live with the play, meaning that he could not accept it as a valid examination of heterosexual life. Well, I'm sure that all the actresses from Uta Hagen to Elizabeth Taylor who've played the role of Martha would be absolutely astonished to learn they've been playing men.

I think it is the responsibility of critics to rely less strenuously on, to use a Hollywood phrase, "what they can live with," and more on an examination of the works of art from an aesthetic and clinical point of view. I would be fascinated to read an intelligent paper documenting from the text that *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is a play written about four homosexuals. It might instruct me about the deep slag pits of my subconscious.

I believe it was Leslie Fiedler, in an article in *Partisan Review*, who commented that if indeed *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* did deal with four disguised homosexuals, the "shock of recognition" on the part of the public is an enormously interesting commentary on the public. To put it most briefly, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* was *not* written about four homosexuals. One might make one more point: had *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* been a play about four homosexuals disguised as heterosexuals, the only valid standard of criticism which could be employed would be whether such license of composite characterization was destructive to the validity of the work of art. Again we come to the question of the critics' responsibility to discuss the work of art not on arbitrary Freudian terms, but on aesthetic ones. Only the most callow or insecure or downright stupid critic would fault Proust's work, for example, for the transposition that he made of characters' sexes. It would be rather like faulting Michelangelo's sculptures of the male figure because of that artist's reputed leanings. So, if a play should appear, next year, say, which the critics in their wisdom see as a disguised homosexual piece, let them remember that the ultimate judgment of a work of art, whether it be a masterpiece or a lesser

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event, must be solely in terms of its artistic success and not on Freudian guesswork.

INTERVIEWER

It's been said by certain critics that your plays generally contain no theme. Others say that you've begun to wear the same theme thin; and still others say that with each play you bravely attack a new theme.

ALBEE

I go up to my room about three or four months out of the year and I write. I don't pay much attention to how the plays relate thematically to each other. I think that's very dangerous to do, because in the theater one is self-conscious enough without planning ahead or wondering about the thematic relation from one play to the next. One hopes that one is developing, and writing interestingly, and that's where it should end, I think.

INTERVIEWER

You've spoken frequently to the effect that your involvement with music has influenced your writing for the theater. Can you elaborate on that in any way?

ALBEE

I find it very difficult. I've been involved in one way or another with serious music ever since childhood. And I do think, or rather I *sense* that there is a relationship—at least in my own work—between a dramatic structure, the form and sound and shape of a play, and the equivalent structure in music. Both deal with sound, of course, and also with idea, theme. I find that when my plays are going well, they seem to resemble pieces of music. But if I had to go into specifics about it, I wouldn't be able to. It's merely something that I feel.

INTERVIEWER

Which contemporary playwrights do you particularly admire? Which do you think have influenced you especially, and in what ways?

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ALBEE

The one living playwright I admire without any reservation whatsoever is Samuel Beckett. I have funny feelings about almost all the others. There are a number of contemporary playwrights whom I admire enormously, but that's not at all the same thing as being influenced. I admire Brecht's work very much. I admire a good deal of Tennessee Williams. I admire some of Genet's works. Harold Pinter's work. I admire Cordell's plays very much, even though I don't think they're very good. But on the matter of influence, that question is difficult. I've read and seen hundreds of plays, starting with Sophocles right up to the present day. As a playwright I imagine that in one fashion or another I've been influenced by every single play I've ever experienced. Influence is a matter of selection—both acceptance and rejection.

INTERVIEWER

In a number of articles, mention is made of the influence on you—either directly or by osmosis—of the theater of cruelty. How do you feel about the theater of cruelty, or the theories of Artaud generally?

ALBEE

Let me answer it this way. About four years ago I made a list, for my own amusement, of the playwrights, the contemporary playwrights, by whom critics said I'd been influenced. I listed twenty-five. It included five playwrights whose work I didn't know, so I read these five playwrights and indeed *now* I suppose I can say I have been influenced by them. The problem is that the people who write these articles find the inevitable similarities of people writing in the same generation, in the same century, and on the same planet, and they put them together in a group.

INTERVIEWER

The point was that the influence may not have been directly through Artaud, but perhaps, as I said, by osmosis.

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ALBEE

I've been influenced by Sophocles and Noel Coward.

INTERVIEWER

Do you aspire to being more than a playwright... to being a sort of complete man of the theater? You've involved yourself in the production of plays by other writers; you've toyed with the idea of doing a musical; you've written a libretto for opera; you've been an articulate interpreter of the American theater as an institution; and even a public critic of professional drama critics. In retrospect, do you feel that you may have overextended yourself in any of these areas?

ALBEE

I've certainly done myself considerable damage, though not as an artist, by attacking the critics, because they can't take it. As for involving myself with the production of other people's plays, I consider that to be a responsibility. The playwrights unit we've been running, Playwrights 66, encourages thirty or thirty-five writers. The plays we've put on in the off-Broadway theater, the Cherry Lane, and other places, are primarily plays that I wanted to see: other people weren't putting them on, so we did. It seems to me that if one finds oneself with the cash it's one's responsibility to do a thing like that. There's certainly no self-aggrandizement. I have done adaptations because I wanted to. I don't like the climate in which writers have to work in this country and I think it's my responsibility to talk about it.

INTERVIEWER

Do you feel that in your own particular case, on the basis of a single big-time commercial hit, that you have been raised to too high a position? For your own creative comfort.

ALBEE

I really can't answer that. I have no idea. As a fairly objective judgment I do think that my plays as they come out are better than most other things that are put on the same year.

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But that doesn't make them very good necessarily. The act of creation, as you very well know, is a lonely and private matter and has nothing to do with the public area... the *performance* of the work one creates. Each time I sit down and write a play I try to dismiss from my mind as much as I possibly can the implications of what I've done before, what I'm going to do, what other people think about my work, the failure or success of the previous play. I'm stuck with a new reality that I've got to create. I'm working on a new play now. I don't believe that I'm being affected by the commercial success of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* to make this one more commercial; I don't think I'm being affected by the critical confusion over *Tiny Alice* to make this one simpler. It's a play. I'm trying to make it as good a work of art as I possibly can.

INTERVIEWER

To talk a little about *Tiny Alice*, which I guess is your most controversial play—during your widely publicized press conference on the stage of the Billy Rose Theater, you said the critical publicity had misled the audiences into thinking of the play as a new game of symbol hunting...which was at least to some degree responsible for the play's limited run. Still, you have also said that if audiences desert a play, it is either the fault of the playwright or the manner in which it was presented. With a year to reflect on the matter, how do you feel about all this now as it pertains to *Tiny Alice?*

ALBEE

I feel pretty much what I said on the stage. I keep remembering that the preview audiences, before the critics went to *Tiny Alice*, didn't have anywhere near the amount of trouble understanding what the play was about; that didn't happen until the critics *told* them that it was too difficult to understand. I also feel that *Tiny Alice* would have been a great deal clearer if I hadn't had to make the cuts I did in the third act.

INTERVIEWER

In view of the experience you had with *Tiny Alice*, the

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critical bruhaha and the different interpretations and the rest of it, if you were to sit down and write that play again, do you think it would emerge in any terribly different way?

ALBEE

It's impossible to tell. A curious thing happens. Within a year after I write a play I forget the experience of having written it. And I couldn't revise or rewrite it if I wanted to. Up until that point, I'm so involved with the experience of having written the play, and the nature of it, that I can't see what faults it might have. The only moment of clear objectivity that I can find is at the moment of critical heat—of self-critical heat when I'm actually writing. Sometimes I think the experience of a play is finished for me when I finish writing it. If it weren't for the need to make a living, I don't know whether I'd have the plays produced. In the two or three or four months that it takes me to write a play, I find that the reality of the play is a great deal more alive for me than what passes for reality. I'm infinitely more involved in the reality of the characters and their situation than I am in everyday life. The involvement is terribly intense. I find that in the course of the day when I'm writing, after three or four hours of intense work, I have a splitting headache, and I have to stop. Because the involvement, which is both creative and self-critical, is so intense that I've got to stop doing it.

INTERVIEWER

If one can talk at all about a general reaction to your plays, it is that as convincing and brilliant as their beginnings and middles might be, the plays tend to let down, change course or simply puzzle at the end. To one degree or another this complaint has been registered against most of them.

ALBEE

Perhaps because my sense of reality and logic is different from most people's. The answer could be as simple as that. Some things that make sense to me don't make the same degree of sense to other people. Analytically, there might be

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other reasons—that the plays don't hold together intellectually; that's possible. But then it mustn't be forgotten that when people don't like the way a play ends, they're likely to blame the play. That's a possibility too. For example, I don't feel that catharsis in a play necessarily takes place during the course of a play. Often it should take place afterwards. If I've been accused a number of times of writing plays where the endings are ambivalent, indeed, that's the way I find life.

INTERVIEWER

Do *The Zoo Story* and *Virginia Woolf* both begin and continue through the longest part of their length on an essentially naturalistic course, and then somewhere toward the end of the play veer away from the precisely naturalistic tone?

ALBEE

I think that if people were a little more aware of what actually is beneath the naturalistic overlay they would be surprised to find how early the unnaturalistic base had been set. When you're dealing with a symbol in a realistic play, it is also a realistic fact. You must expect the audience's mind to work on both levels, symbolically and realistically. But we're trained so much in pure, realistic theater that it's difficult for us to handle things on two levels at the same time.

INTERVIEWER

Why did you pick the names George and Martha? As in Washington? What did you make of Arthur Schlesinger's discovery that with those names you'd obviously written a parallel of the American socio-political dilemma?

ALBEE

There are little local and private jokes. Indeed, I did name the two lead characters of *Virginia Woolf* George and Martha because there is contained in the play—not its most important point, but certainly contained within the play—an attempt to examine the success or failure of American revolutionary principles. Some people who are historically and

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politically and socio-logically inclined find them. Now in one play—*Virginia Woolf* again—I named a very old Western Union man "Little Billy"—"Crazy Billy" rather. And I did that because as *you* might recall, Mr. Flanagan, you used to deliver telegrams for Western Union, and you are very old and your name is Billy. Things like that—lots of them going on in the plays. In *Zoo Story*, I named two characters Peter and Jerry. I know two people named Peter and Jerry. But then the learned papers started coming in, and of course Jerry is supposed to be Jesus...which is much more interesting, I suppose, to the public than the truth.

INTERVIEWER

Going back to those "levels of understanding," in *Virginia Woolf* the audience questioned the credibility of George and Martha having invented for themselves an imaginary son.

ALBEE

Indeed. And it always struck me very odd that an audience would be unwilling to believe that a highly educated, sensitive and intelligent couple, who were terribly good at playing reality and fantasy games, *wouldn't* have the education, the sensitivity, and the intelligence to create a realistic symbol for themselves. To use as they saw fit.

INTERVIEWER

Recognizing the fact that it was a symbol?

ALBEE

Indeed recognizing the fact that it was a symbol. And only occasionally being confused, when the awful loss and lack that made the creation of the symbol essential becomes overwhelming—like when they're drunk, for example. Or when they're terribly tired.

INTERVIEWER

What you're saying is something which I guess is not really too commonly understood. You're suggesting that George and Martha have at no point deluded themselves about the fact that they're playing a game.

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ALBEE

Oh, never. Except that it's the most serious game in the world. And the non-existent son is a symbol and a weapon they use in every one of their arguments.

INTERVIEWER

A symbolic weapon rather than a real weapon. In the midst of the very real weapons that they do use.

ALBEE

Indeed yes. Though they're much too intelligent to make that confusion. For me, that's why the loss is doubly poignant. Because they are not deluded people.

INTERVIEWER

I see. Then what you're trying to suggest now is that the last act of *Virginia Woolf* is in no way less naturalistic than the first two acts.

ALBEE

I don't find that the play veers off into a less naturalistic manner at all.

INTERVIEWER

Well, if not into a less naturalistic one, certainly into a more ritualistic, stylized one. With the Requiem Masses and all that.

ALBEE

Well, going into Latin, indeed. But that's a conscious choice of George's to read the Requiem Mass which has existed in Latin for quite a number of years. I like the sound of the two languages working together. I like the counterpoint of the Latin and the English working together.

There's one point that you've brought up that annoys me. It really annoys the hell out of me. Some critics accuse me of having a failure of intellect in the third act of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, merely because *they* didn't have the ability to understand what was happening. And that annoys the hell out of me.

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INTERVIEWER

I can see that it would. A critic recently wrote the following paragraph, "Mr. Albee complained with *Tiny Alice* that people asked questions and would not let the play merely occur to them. He complains of those critics who judge a play's matter and do not restrict themselves to its manner. Both of these statements tend to a view much in vogue—that art consists principally of style, an encounter between us and the figurative surface of a work. This view reduces ideas to decoration, character to pageant, symbol and feeling to a conveyor belt for effects. It is to shrink art to no more than a sensual response, one kind or another of happening. To some of us this modish view is nihilistic, not progressive." Now the critic in question has come fairly close to defining a theory that might be got out of, say, Susan Sontag's *Against Interpretation* or her essay on style. I wonder how closely the critic's interpretations of your remarks—of the remarks, I guess, that you made most specifically at the *Tiny Alice* press conference—are true to your own understanding of them.

ALBEE

Well, this critic is a sophist. What he's done is to misinterpret my attitudes, Miss Sontag's attitudes, and the attitudes of most respectable creative people. What I said is that I thought it was not valid for a critic to criticize a play for its matter rather than its manner—that what was constituted then was a type of censorship. To give an extreme example, I was suggesting that if a man writes a brilliant enough play in praise of something that is universally loathed, that the play, if it is good and well enough written, should not be knocked down because of its approach to its subject. If the work of art is good enough, it must not be criticized for its theme. I don't think it can be argued. In the thirties a whole school of criticism bogged down intellectually in those agitprop, social-realistic days. A play had to be progressive. A number of plays by playwrights who were thought very highly of then—they were very bad playwrights—were highly praised because their themes were intellectually and politically proper.

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This intellectual morass is very dangerous, it seems to me. A form of censorship. You may dislike the intention enormously but your judgment of the artistic merit of the work must not be based on your view of what it's about. The work of art must be judged by how well it succeeds in its intention.

INTERVIEWER

In other words, what you're saying is that a critic should separate what he takes to be the thematic substance of a play from the success or lack of success that the author brings to its presentation.

ALBEE

It's that simple. And critics who do otherwise are damn fools and dangerous, even destructive people. I don't think it can be argued.

INTERVIEWER

You have said that it is through the actual process of writing that you eventually come to know the theme of your play. Sometimes you've admitted that even when you have finished a play you don't have any specific idea about its theme. What about that?

ALBEE

Naturally, no writer who's any good at all would sit down and put a sheet of paper in a typewriter and start typing a play unless he knew what he was writing about. But at the same time, writing has got to be an act of discovery. Finding out things about what one is writing about. To a certain extent I imagine a play is completely finished in my mind—in my case at any rate—without my knowing it, before I sit down to write. So in that sense, I suppose, writing a play is *finding out* what the play is. I always find that the better answer to give. It's a question I despise, and it always seems to me

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better to slough off the answer to a question which I consider to be a terrible invasion of privacy—the kind of privacy that a writer must keep for himself. If you intellectualize and examine the creative process too carefully, it can evaporate and vanish. It's not only terribly difficult to talk about, it's also dangerous. You know the old story about the—I think it's one of Aesop's Fables, or perhaps not, or a Chinese story—about the very clever animal that saw a centipede that he didn't like. He said, "My God, it's amazing and marvelous how you walk with all those hundreds and hundreds of legs. How do you do it? How do you get them all moving that way?" The centipede stopped and thought and said, "Well, I take the left front leg and then I—" and he thought about it for a while, and he couldn't walk.

INTERVIEWER

How long does the process of reflection about a play go on?

ALBEE

I usually think about a play anywhere from six months to a year and a half before I sit down to write it out.

INTERVIEWER

Think it through, or—

ALBEE

Think *about* it. Though I'm often accused of never thinking anything through, I think about it. True, I don't begin with an *idea* for a play—a thesis, in other words, to construct the play around. But I know a good deal about the nature of the characters. I know a great deal about their environment. And I more or less know what is going to happen in the play. It's only when I sit down to write it that I find out exactly what the characters are going to say, how they are going to move from one situation to another. Exactly how they are going to behave within the situation to produce the predeter-

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mined result.... If I didn't do it that way, I wouldn't be able to allow the characters the freedom of expression to make them three-dimensional. Otherwise, I'd write a treatise, not a play. Usually the way I write is to sit down at a typewriter after that year or so of what passes for thinking, and I write a first draft quite rapidly. Read it over. Make a few pencil corrections, where I think I've got the rhythms wrong in the speeches, for example, and then retype the whole thing. And in the retyping I discover that maybe one or two more speeches will come in. One or two more things will happen, but not much. Usually what I put down first is what we go into rehearsal with; the majority of the selections and decisions have gone on before I sit down at the typewriter.

INTERVIEWER

Could you describe what sort of reflection goes on? Do whole scenes evolve in your mind, or is the process so deep in your subconscious that you're hardly aware of what's going on?

ALBEE

I discover that I am thinking about a play, which is the first awareness I have that a new play is forming. When I'm aware of the play forming in my head, it's already at a certain degree in development. Somebody will ask, well what do you plan to write after the next play? And I'll suddenly surprise myself by finding myself saying, oh, a play about this, a play about that—I had never even thought about it before. So obviously a good deal of thinking has been going on, whether subconscious or unconscious is the proper term here I don't know. But whichever it is, the majority of the work gets done there. And that period can go on for six months or in the case of *The Substitute Speaker*, which is a play that I hope to be able to write this coming summer, it's a process that has been going on for three and a half years. Occasionally I pop the play up to the surface—into the conscious mind to see how it's coming along, to see how it is developing. And if the characters seem to be becoming three-dimensional, all

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to the good. After a certain point, I make experiments to see how well I *know* the characters. I'll improvise and try them out in a situation that I'm fairly sure *won't* be in the play. And if they behave quite naturally, in this improvisatory situation, and create their own dialogue, and behave according to what I consider to be their own natures, then I suppose I have the play far enough along to sit down and write it.

INTERVIEWER

Is that when you know that a play has gone through this "subconscious" process and is ready to come out?

ALBEE

Not necessarily. It's when I find myself typing.

INTERVIEWER

That's not an answer.

ALBEE

It really is. There's a time to go to the typewriter. It's like a dog—the way a dog before it craps wanders around in circles—a piece of earth, an area of grass, circles it for a long time before it squats. It's like that—figuratively circling the typewriter getting ready to write, and then finally one sits down. I think I sit down to the typewriter when it's time to sit down to the typewriter. That isn't to suggest that when I do finally sit down at the typewriter, and write out my plays with a speed that seems to horrify all my detractors and half of my well-wishers, that there's no work involved. It *is* hard work, and one *is* doing all the work oneself. Still, I know playwrights who like to kid themselves into saying that their characters are so well formed that *they* just take over. *They* determine the structure of the play. By which is meant, I suspect, only that the unconscious mind has done its work so thoroughly that the play just has to be filtered through the conscious mind. But there's work to be done—and discovery to be made. Which is part of the pleasure of it. It's a form of pregnancy I suppose, and to carry that idea further, there are

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very few people who are pregnant who can recall specifically the moment of conception of the child—but they discover that they are pregnant, and it's rather that way with discovering that one is thinking about a play.

INTERVIEWER

When you start, do you move steadily from the opening curtain through to the end, or do you skip around, doing one scene, then another? What about curtain lines? Is there a conscious building toward the finale of each act?

ALBEE

For better or for worse, I write the play straight through—from what I consider the beginning to what I consider the end. As for curtain lines, well, I suppose there are playwrights who do build toward curtain lines. I don't think I do that. In a sense, it's the same choice that has to be made when you wonder when to start a play. And when to end it. The characters' lives have gone on before the moment you chose to have the action of the play begin. And their lives are going to go on after you have lowered the final curtain on the play, unless you've killed them off. A play is a parenthesis which contains all the material you think has to be contained for the action of the play. Where do you end that? Where the characters seem to come to a pause...where they seem to want to stop—rather like, I would think, the construction of a piece of music.

INTERVIEWER

You think of yourself then as an intuitive playwright. What you're saying in effect now is that superimposing any fixed theme on your work would somehow impose limitations on your subconscious imaginative faculties.

ALBEE

I suspect that the theme, the nature of the characters, and the method of getting from the beginning of the play to the end is already established in the unconscious.

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INTERVIEWER

If one worked expressly by intuition then doesn't the form get out of control?

ALBEE

When one controls form, one doesn't do it with a stop watch or a graph. One does it by sensing, again intuitively.

INTERVIEWER

After writing a play in this sort of intuitive way, do you end by accepting its overall structure (which must also be something of a revelation to you), or do you go back and rewrite and revise with the idea of giving it cogent shape?

ALBEE

I more or less trust it to come out with shape. Curiously enough, the only two plays that I've done very much revision on were the two adaptations—even though the shape of them was pretty much determined by the original work. With my own plays, the only changes, aside from taking a speech out here, putting one in there (if I thought I dwelled on a point a little too long or didn't make it explicit enough), are very minor; but even though they're very minor—having to do with the inability of actors or the unwillingness of the director to go along with me—I've always regretted them.

INTERVIEWER

Your earlier work, from *The Zoo Story* to *Virginia Woolf*, brought you very quick and major international celebrity, even though today at—thirty-eight—

ALBEE

Thirty-seven.

INTERVIEWER

When this is published it will be thirty-eight—you would otherwise be regarded as a relatively young growing writer. Do you feel this major renown, for all the doubtless pleasure and financial security it has given you, is any threat to the growth of the young playwright?

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ALBEE

Well, there are two things that a playwright can have. Success or failure. I imagine there are dangers in both. Certainly the danger of being faced with indifference or hostility is discouraging, and it may be that success—acceptance if it's too quick, too lightning quick—can turn the heads of some people.

INTERVIEWER

I was thinking less in terms of what the personal effect on you would be. In terms of what you said before, there seems to be a certain pattern that's acted out in the American theater, if not exclusively in the American theater, of elevating new playwrights to enormous prestige, and then after a certain time lapse, arrived at arbitrarily, the need comes to cut them down to size.

ALBEE

Well, the final determination is made anywhere from twenty-five to one hundred years after the fact anyway. And if the playwright is strong enough to hold on to reasonable objectivity in the face either of hostility or praise, he'll do his work the way he was going to anyway.

INTERVIEWER

Since I guess it's fairly imbecilic to ask a writer what he considers to be his best work or his most important work, perhaps I could ask you this question: which of all of your plays do you feel closest to?

ALBEE

Well, naturally the one I'm writing right now.

INTERVIEWER

Well, excepting that.

ALBEE

I don't know.

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INTERVIEWER

There's no one that you feel any special fondness for?

ALBEE

I'm terribly fond of *The Sandbox*. I think it's an absolutely beautiful, lovely, perfect play.

INTERVIEWER

And as for the play you're writing now...

ALBEE

A Delicate Balance, which I am writing now. *The Substitute Speaker*, next, and then in some order or another, three short plays, plus a play about Attila the Hun.

INTERVIEWER

You say three short plays. Do you hold forth any prospect of going off-Broadway with anything?

ALBEE

Well, considering the way the critical reaction to my plays has been going in the past few years, I may well be there shortly.

INTERVIEWER

I was thinking out of choice rather than necessity.

ALBEE

I'm talking about that too.

WILLIAM FLANAGAN

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Rondeau for the Yule

I got away with it all summer will
I get away with it all fall
& more importantly winter.
Infinitesimal yearnings, the romantic
or western concept of love
(note Traherne's)
familiar concept.

It fills
the cup in me with thorns
I am cruel to the children.
That is,
You stride up the street & I
get on a bus.
We got away with it for the past three years.

Another escaping & you are not so dumb
That you didn't see that in it.
There are Xmas decorations in the windows.
Four Christmases ago or the summer before
and mostly ephemeral.
The seasons roll over it
flattening it out.
Still, a flicker of interest: what a funny hat
You're wearing.

Rejoice!
Architectonic bells
Motets of pain.
Anger, or is it just the wind is cold?

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Exultate,
a thin grey cry
that the eagles carry between
my bus & your walking;

O beautiful city
juggling us both in its hands
playing jacks with us like an unskillful girl
O winter closing down on our separate shells.

—DIANE DI PRIMA
December 1963

Kool Aid—

Elegy on the Death of my Uncle

"Bone, it remembers and explodes"
—Joe Brainard

I remember you with your loaf of Italian bread

In your mature years after the promised farm
The photo left in your innocence of knickers
  black confirmation suit the piano seat

The day after you died I sat in the park and imagined
Alaric the Goth, and likened him to Mao Tse-Tung.

  I thought I wouldn't like to be little &
  Roman
In that truculent time, under a burning defecating Roman column

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These I reasoned were the orgaic cycles that sucked you up
  & into them emblazoned you forever
That now America wears Nero's laurels

You came home one day
And in your beach chair dropped dead secretly near the raspberry Kool Ai
  "after work"

Leaving your child a dazed eternal prancing firebird
Around the swimming pool
  Your wife a grey menhir tottering

A quick history for your 42 years Idaho and the CCC's
Souvenir bead brocades your pigeon's breast
  the cut string

All at once
All at once with your every nasal gesture disapproval
Pagination frought with a thousand girls in my mourning
  history read out loud with headlines of your nerves

That night I had come home stoned laughing at the unlocked front
  door:
Stifling the defamed plebiscite
Of your death standing still withering in its partition door for mouth

Wreath & mother seemed one

—SOTERE TORREGIAN

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Two Poems by Pablo Neruda

Melancholy Inside Families

I keep a blue bottle.
Inside it an ear and a portrait.
When the night dominates
the feathers of the owl,
when the hoarse cherry tree
rips out its lips and makes menacing gestures
with rinds which the ocean wind often perforates—
then I know that there are immense expanses hidden from us,
quartz in slugs,
ooze,
blue waters for a battle,
much silence, many ore-veins
of withdrawals and camphor,
fallen things, medallions, kindnesses,
parachutes, kisses.

It is only the passage from one day to another,
a single bottle moving over the seas,
and a dining room where roses arrive,
a dining room deserted
as a fish-bone: I am speaking of
a smashed cup, a curtain, at the end
of a deserted room through which a river passes
dragging along the stones. It is a house
set on the foundations of the rain,
a house of two floors with the required number of windows,
and climbing vines faithful in every particular.

I walk through afternoons, I arrive
full of mud and death,
dragging along the earth and its roots,
and its indistinct stomach in which corpses
are sleeping with wheat,
metals, and pushed-over elephants.

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But above all there is a terrifying,
a terrifying deserted dining room,
with its broken olive oil cruets,
and vinegar running under its chairs,
one ray of moonlight tied down,
something dark, and I look
for a comparison inside myself:
perhaps it is a grocery store surrounded by the sea
and torn clothing from which sea water is dripping.
It is only a deserted dining room,
and around it there are expanses,
sunken factories, pieces of timber
which I alone know
because I am sad, and because I travel,
and I know the earth, and I am sad.

Friends on the Road (1921)

Then I arrived at the capital, vaguely saturated
with fog and rain. What streets were those?
The garments of 1921 were breeding
in an ugly smell of gas, coffee, and bricks.
I walked among the students without understanding,
pulling the walls inside me, searching
each day into my poor poetry for the branches,
the drops of rain, and the moon, that had been lost.
I went deep into it for help, sinking
each evening into its waters, grasping
energies I could not touch, the seagulls of a deserted sea,
until I closed my eyes and was shipwrecked in the middle
of my own body.
Were these things dark shadows,
were they only hidden damp leaves stirred up from the soil?
What was the wounded substance from which death was pouring out
until it touched my arms and legs, controlled my smile,
and dug a well of pain in the streets?

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I went out into life: I grew and was hardened,
I walked through the hideous back-alleys
without compassion, singing out on the frontiers
of delirium. The walls filled with faces:
eyes that did not look at light, twisted waters
lit up by a crime, legacies
of solitary pride, holes
filled with hearts that had been condemned and torn down.
I walked with them: it was only in that chorus
that my voice refound the solitudes
where it was born.

I finally became a man
singing among the flames, accepted
by friends who find their place in the night,
who sang with me in the taverns,
and who gave me more than a single kindness,
something they had defended with their fighting hands,
which was more than a spring,
a fire unknown elsewhere, the natural foliage
of the places slowly falling down at the city's edge.

translations by James Wright and Robert Bly

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Martial Raysse:

...The unconditioned eye does not exist. The general public sees the world today with eyes that were developed by the Impressionists —this education of perception spread by means of newspapers, publicity, and so forth. A painter exerts an action upon perception, engineers vision, but what was I going to say? Oh, yes... vision, a psychological phenomenon, subjective...and emotional.... In a room where a definite color determines the prevailing tone, the beloved will change color in relation to her surroundings. If you look at a face and fix your attention on the nose, the nose will not only change its size, but also its color in relation to the rest of the face. These were the observations that I wanted to translate in the works I called "*à géométrie variable*" (variable geometry). For example, in the big painting entitled "*Paysage à géométrie variable et à Martial Raysse kilomètres-heure*" exhibited at Venice, each element was treated as a world in itself, with its own particular color scheme and scale, independent of the others, in order to express the attention that was directed to a specific part of the landscape at a given moment. All of those elements, taken together, constituted a picture which was a seismographic record of the psychological variations of the painting act considered as a life act. The special shape chosen permitted me to define a basic-space that would convey my ideas most conveniently. This choice is based on the following considerations: coming from the field of "*l'art d'assemblage*" where the objects I utilized were common property, I had for a long time felt the need of creating prefabricated objects of my own, my prototypes; and to replace the stereotypes of society with my own personal ones. It was in this sense that I defined a certain shape of mouth and eye, or certain elements like palm trees, chickens, boats, etc., which I could use in a given context to express certain personal psychological definitions. I wish to emphasize that my works do not employ variable elements, but variable geometry. The elements are not parts of a game that can be shifted within the framework of the specific picture surface. Not at all, for if this were true it would merely represent another form of action painting. For me it is the very geometry of the work itself that is variable; that is to say, it is the space determined by its boundaries and the psychological comparisons that result from the proximity or the separation of the elements. I consider this much like our own existence where all the elements are profoundly dissimilar, but are brought into coexistence by an act of will that coincides with the very notion of life itself.

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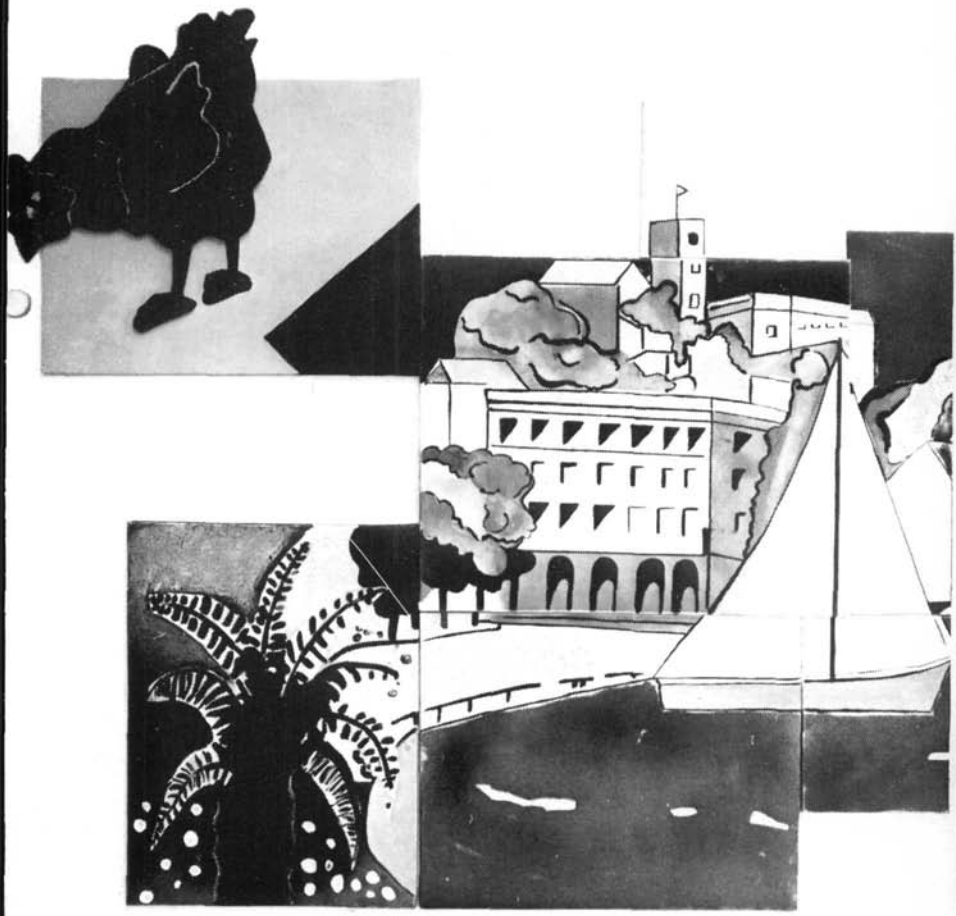
"à géométrie variable"



Paysage à géométrie variable et à Martial Raysse kilomètres-heure

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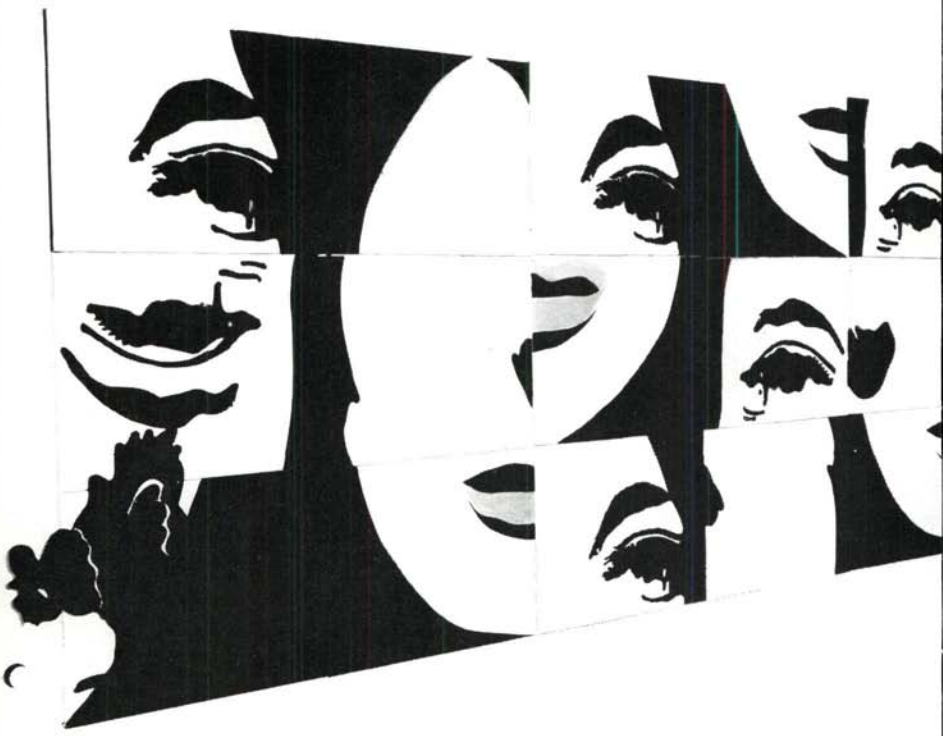

Express Certain Psychological Definitions and So What About the Chicken

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Portrait à géométrie variable

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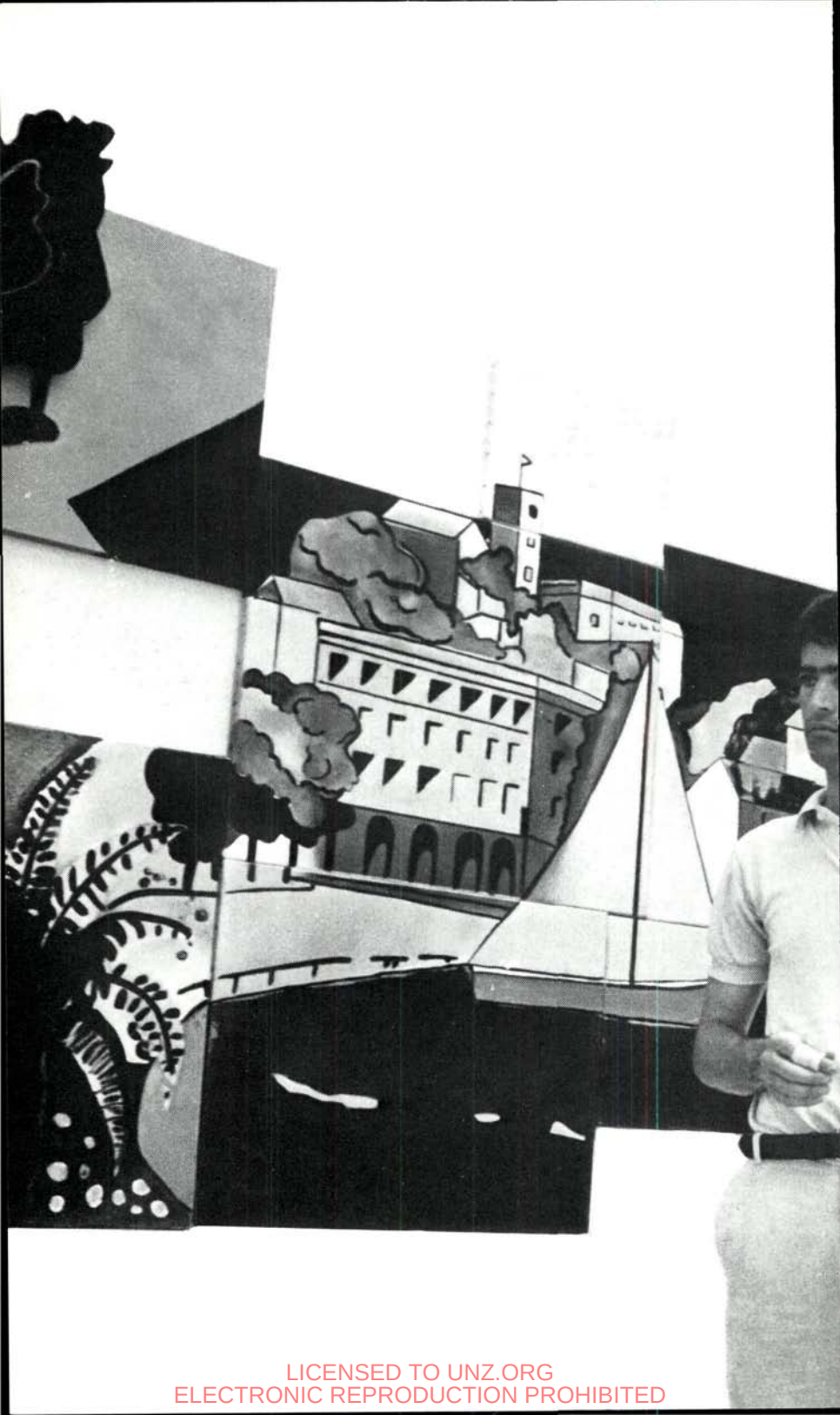

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Martial Raysse at the Venice Biennale

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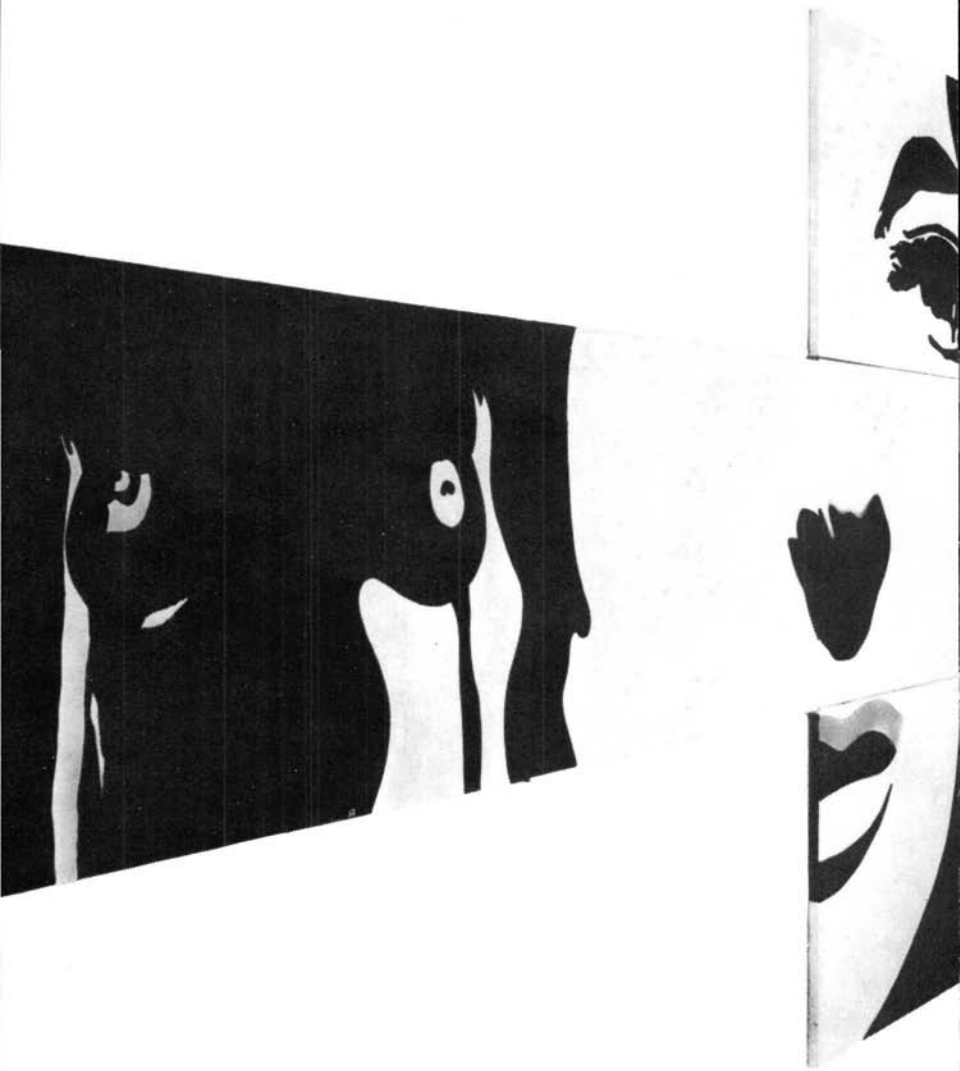

Approached, Penelope Approaches

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Visage à perspective infinie

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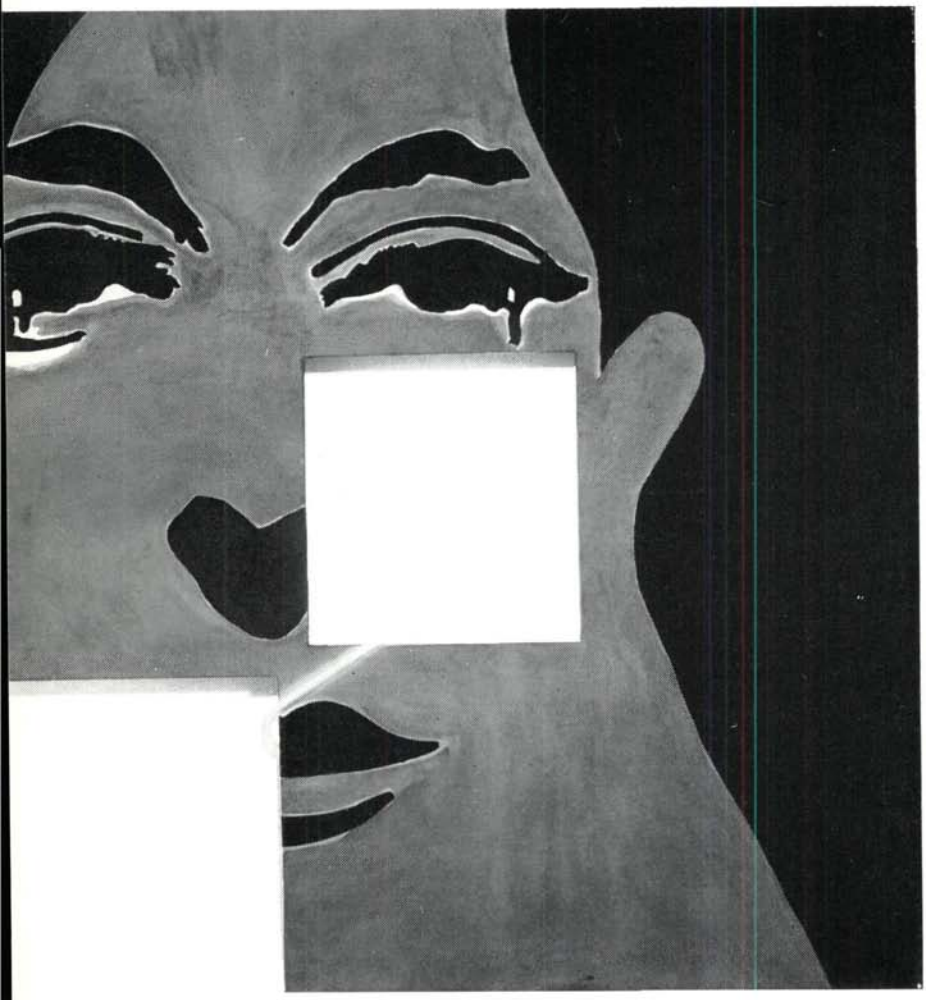

Anxiously Quiet and Violet

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Trans

"*The D. J. Speaks*"

"O.K. imps, snot-freaks, pill-elves,
hi-fi fairy-fury flipsters and intelligences,
its out, all out now onto the rooftops—

Your only chance left now
is to come out here into the naked star-fright
and freak it out alone.

Yes, out until it's scared the living
Fainlights out of you;
jumping you out of your star-split wits
and back into your sprite mind.

Released in your new fledged
LSD lieutenantries
above the cities of the West—

Luftpost TV antennae-quivering falconries suddenly
checking in the new-alerted starlight as you realize
some fresh gleaming ledge of intelligence
on which to alight.

—Was it witch I said then?
Yes, witch-kids, witch-kids,
riding out on your broomstick wavebands
night after night.

Behind their mumbo-jumboing
guitars, each group
another coven of them—
Trans—
Trance—

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TranceSISters
shrieking the bisexual superhet electronic
guts out of them coast to coast and trans—
atlantic and all the way back round again and
again and again—the hair of those trance
atlantic telephonists left
crackling behind them.

And then up—
up and round the whole Van Allen belt and back
tingling with ions!
—The whole billion brain-valved telepathic wavelength left
blasted behind them.

And then finally off—
off blowing that long cool solo out into space you never
want to come back from but must,
must for this final chorus when the whole heavy
nuclear combo starts laying it down—
blasting the dumb-ox blockbusters out of
your old conventional consciousness—
WHAT?
you think this is just some little
railway sidings halloween or something?
No baby, this is the real H-bomb witch stuff
flying around in here tonight
so just you mind your spooks and cues
and smile, SMILE
cause you know this is only
that little D.J. joke your D.J. daddy's
been having with you all this while.
You know, that old saggy god story
about how this week again
'The Eve of Destruction'
will be going like a Bomb."

—HARRY FAINLIGHT

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Skyblue on the Dump

Dallas E. Wiebe

Sky stood in the gray, sepulchral hallway of the University of Michigan library. He was early to return his Snorri Sturluson and *Le Ménagier de Paris*, both due at 8:00 A.M. And he regretted, he mourned, he pined indifferently, that those great structures of the heart must go back to the shelves in librarian time while he, Skyblue, waited in his skyblue levis, his Botticelli hair, his Billy Budd eyes, himself a gnomon of six feet and 150 pounds of undeveloped imagination, his nose aquiline, his ears quincunxes and his throat a pillar of clean-shaven agility. With all that he waited on the shiny gray stone patiently while the greasy heat rolled through the halls and fixed sweat on his trembling lip. He waited and felt at home after twenty-five years of wandering. It was his place and he longed to be up and at the *Njals Saga*, for it was Spring and rosy-lipped Aurora slap-dashed her frail tints across the moist campus. Sky stood in nonchalance, awakened and ready for the everlasting heroism of a fiction.

He came to be first—first come, first served—into Graduate Reading Room 2 so that he could claim his own, so that he could be first at the tattered translations which he was reading for his class in medieval literature. These were his first love of the moment. All old and crumbling and crudely taped or glued together, their margins were filled with the marginalia

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of the poor in spirit. How was it that one could dismiss those great God-lovers of the Middle Ages with a "fuck you," a "shit" or a "crap." Yet the rude scribblings of the graduate students and the clumsy repairs of the librarians couldn't destroy the acrid fillip of *The Babee's Book* (oranges), Chrétien de Troyes (skyblue covers: E.L.: lemons) or the *Autobiography of Ousâma* (limes). In addition to the ravages of time and hands, all that enchantment in a fouled vessel was guarded by a fuzzy-faced genie who had never known the trials, the tribulations, the ecstasy, under skyblue covers. Sky thought, "knock, and it shall be opened unto you," "first to knock, first admitted," "ask and ye shall receive," "first come, first served," and Skyblue was served first when Mrs. Limb arrived in a cloud of stinks that poured from toes, ankles, thighs, crotch, anus, armpits, neck, hair, ears, nose and mouth, and, gasping for air, she let Sky into that austere repository, into that Ft. Knox of clumsy translations. She became an archaeologist opening a Pharaoh's tomb along the Nile. Sky smiled down upon the smiling stink and took the *Njals Saga* into his lilac-soft hands. Skyblue took the skyblue book into his account, the book whose covers were the color of the hero.

He went to a table at the rear of the room and eased himself into the past. He read first of Njal, of the clap and clatter around the first fact of death. He read of Flosi and the genealogy of revenge and slaughter, of weddings, courts, of pleadings of suits, of "that steak of mare's rump which thou atest ere thou rodest to the Thing." In it all there was something missing and Sky knew it was the suffering. Surely it must hurt to have a limb hacked off "at a stroke." Surely heroes felt pain when they died in fire even if covered with an oxhide. Think of the suffering of Njal, Bergthora and the grandson, Thord, as they lay in bed waiting for the end. Not even the imperialistic idiom of the Westminster schoolboy, Sir George Webbe Dasent, could obliterate the firm fact of death. No more could the skyblue covers of Everyman's Library or the sick jokes of the hero. That's right, Burnt Njal, go to bed early. Get a lot of rest, like forever. And what the hell, why knock a man's eye out with the jawtooth of a victim.

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The large yellow shades on the windows bellied out in the breeze, leveled, snapped like a whip and then fell back against the steel frames of the windows. Each time the shades lifted, the morning sunlight crept upon the table. It touched Sky's notes and his text in a Universitas Michiganensium ebb and flow of light. The breeze, the sunlight, his trembling hands, fell flat across the burning bones, the ringing swords, the storms, the deaths, the fallen arms, the freshman prose of the heroic past, across the turgid idiom of the hero.

Skyblue closed Burnt Njal and turned to *The Spanish Tragedy*. Far better the melodrama of Kyd than that Dasent mush. Here the lines he loved lay supine and trembling in that *bateau ivre* of rhetoric and death. The phrases bellied out in the breeze with the curtains, circumvented his joy and spilled over his will. He gave in to "In time the savage bull sustains the yoke,/ In time all haggard hawks will stoop to lure, / In time small wedges cleave the hardest oak, / In time the flint is pierc'd with softest shower." And that said about a woman. Sky wanted to laugh with pleasure at the fullness of the lines and the fullness of time that brought him to them. He felt the click and push in the automatic vendor that is fate. His paper cup filled, overflowed, and the change tinkled into its appointed hopper. He gave in to the resonance. He luxuriated in connotation. He dropped back to punt from his own memory.

Skyblue lay in the first grass of Spring. He was tired from the night ride to Wichita and the stockyards, and the fuzzy grass comforted him with its odor of a well-washed woman with no perfume on. He lay to look past the board fence that was the corral in which his brother-in-law kept his breeding cows and his Black Angus bull, Pursus Delicianus Humbugus, whose dam was Felicia Procreaster Lowbellia and whose sire was Elmerus Bloomflower Priapustule. The grass was like a cotton comforter and the bull was huge and sky-blotting. His hooves were dainty. They were what literary people call "feat." The hair around the hooves looped down over them like unraveled spats. His legs were straight and short so that his cylindrical body seemed to be mounted on four thick pegs.

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His back was flat, a mesa for dirt and flies. His rump square with a rust-colored stripe under the tail. His shoulders arched like the dome of a church. His dewlap tolled as he walked from cow to cow. His hair was like black astrakhan, especially where the spit curls wheeled about and in and out in the middle of his face. His tongue regularly looped up into a black nostril and cleaned it so that he would make no mistakes when he sampled the urine of his cows. A goatee of spittle swung from his lower lip and spun away into the wind with a curlicue on the end like the whirl on the top of a Dairy Queen cone.

Pursus stood and swatted flies with his tail. He stamped his foot to drive them from his fetlocks. Sky watched him as he leisurely walked among his cows. Sometimes he would stop behind a jackknifed cow and sample her urine in his nose, as if he were a chemist trying to identify the elements of a substance. If he filtered out the right substance in his wrinkled test tube, he took an interest.

Skyblue lay like a bug in the grass and tried to quiet the disquiet that whipper-snappered around his welkin-blitzing eyes and his lilac-pungent loins. It was the old mystery, virile with his breath and again active, that he found in books and pictures, among stories of snakes and gold and lice, in accounts of bulls running through streets and goring cardboard boxes and screaming people. Bullfighters carried out with dark stains on their thighs as if they had wet their pants. Young boys practicing the whizz-bang of death with a chair with knives tied to its legs. Bulldogs especially bred to bite the frame of the bull. Bull-baiting in the Golden Age of a toothless Elizabeth. Herakles fighting a bull head-on. Phalaris roasting people alive in a brazen bull. Bull-voiced mimes and bull-gods wading up out of the sea. Pentheus on Cithaeron in his illegal madness finding a raging bull in a manger and seeing a wild bull charge. Then ripped to pieces, his mother leading the fearsome charge, for not worshiping the bull-god, Dionysus. People eating raw bull meat in the Orphic mysteries. Zagreus and Mithras eaten in the form of a bull; Christ eaten in the form of a soda cracker. Agrigentum the town of Phala-

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ris and the burial site of Minos. Bulls eaten by people; people eaten by bulls. Gods eaten in bulls; bulls eaten in gods. Bulls talking; people bellowing. Bulls screwing people; people screwing bulls. Bulls fleeing from people; people fleeing from bulls. Christ, had there ever been an amnesty, there might have been no mythology. Think of it, the end of myth. But that will happen only in The Peaceable Kingdom of a Quaker sign-painter. Then there will be only theology, Whitmans, neuroses, but not a lick of myth. Maybe that's what that scene in *Madame Bovary* is all about, that scene in which a ragged boy holds a big black bull on a rope. The bull is motionless in a strap harness and he has an iron ring through his nose. It's Jackie Coogan holding the raging sea on a leash.

Dolphins the symbols of calm seas; bulls the symbols of storms. Horses and dark-colored bulls sacrificed to Poseidon, the god of the sea, of storms, of fury the king. Sometimes they threw black bulls into the sea alive to propitiate schizoid Poseidon. For him, bull fights and temples on promontories. For king bull, death in a high wind. It was this same silly clown, Poseidon, who sent the white bull to Minos and caused Pasiphaë to fall in love with him. From which clumsy union came the Minotaur, half man and half bull, which is a disgrace to both man and bull to be half what he is not. Human sacrifices to him from Greece into the labyrinth. And the Near East and Greece and Crete are often spoken of as "the cradle of civilization." Skyblue knew there is no civilization where the bull is degraded. He brings life; he does not end death. And even the big bully boy got into the act. Io was driven to the Nile and then dropped Epaphos. Zeus in the form of a white bull seduced the daughter of Phoenix. She lay on the beach in her bikini. She oiled her thighs and her arms while the bull roar watched from his cabana. When he minced up to her, they played catch with a beach ball. When he invited her in for a swim, he swam away with her to crack, so to speak, that Festung Europa.

Suddenly Sky saw a great white bull approach Edith. She was frightened but he was gentle. He snuffled, virile with his breath, among her fingers until they caressed his horns and

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diddled his curls. She stroked his head as she stroked the heads of small boys during recess at Ferdinand Elementary. She rubbed his small horns until his eyes drooped in the Spring sun. He smelled of cinnamon and cloves and she picked pansies and wove them in his hair around his warm poll.

Soon the great white bull lowered his head and sank to his belly in the furry grass. Edith put her left knee on his spine. Her straight right leg braced her against the soil. Then she ran her left hand over the bull's head, inserted her fingers into his nostrils and pulled his head up. His eyes filled with bull-fire from the invincible sun. She bit his shoulder and pinched his rubbery scrotum with her right hand. When she put that hand on his iron shaft, his tail twitched to knock away the gadfly. She arose, lifted her skirt and straddled the bull. When she locked her bare bottom onto his spine, he lifted her with the strength of the sun and slowly walked off across the pasture. She gave a cry of delight when she felt the hairy bone rubbing her thighs.

Edith leaned forward awkwardly over the bull-hump and clung to his short hair. He was strong and sure-footed. Her red neckerchief and her blond hair streamed in the wind. As the bull walked, her skirt walked up to her hips. He carried her to Sand Creek, waded across and set her down in a cool, bee-loud glade by the waterside where they were under the trees, beyond the putrid rock and where there were leaves enough to crown their poignant bliss. When she undressed, they lay beside each other in ponderous connubiality, she on her back with arms outstretched into the furry grass, he, the Bull Brummell of the Kansas prairies, leaned his head over her and licked her breasts and her loins with his sandpaper tongue. When Edith rose to her hands and knees, Skyblue saw the great white bull mount his fifth-grade teacher and scribble on her rump with his leaking ballpoint. Her glasses fogged up, her ears twitched like a happy bloom, her belly and guts hung down like a hammock and her thighs quivered round like cherry jello. She, on all fours and straining to the joy, smiled like a dead 'possum.

Skyblue's brother-in-law, Dirtbrown, had picked him up

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in Newton at midnight. Sky was tired then, but he went along to keep Dirtbrown awake. The truck was a green International with red wheels and a high red Omaha stockbed. In the frail light of Nagol Street, Sky could see two humps in the back of the truck. They belonged to two bulls, one brown and one black, and they were so large that about six inches of their backs projected out of the stockrack. Sky noticed as he got into the truck that they were chained with log chains to the bed of the truck. That's why their heads were down. He also saw that they were baloney bulls. They were old. Their backs were scarred and pitted where their owners had tamed them by sawing their spines, sticking them with pitchforks in the rumps or by shooting buckshot into their humps. Both bulls had bronze rings in their noses and the rings gathered light about them in the darkness. Both no longer had the fifteen foot chains that were usually attached to the rings to keep the bulls from a running charge. Skyblue had often seen farmers grab those long log chains and whip them about until the bull bled at the nose. He also once saw his father saw the spine of a bull, as if the spine were a log. It was a way of domesticating majesty.

It began to drizzle when they turned off First Street onto Highway 81 and headed south towards Wichita. The road was deserted and Dirtbrown switched on the radio and tuned in to New Orleans. Someone was singing about an infirmary and a gold piece and a tailgate. It made little sense to Skyblue. Five miles south of Newton, the drizzle stopped and the sky began to clear. They passed the cut-offs to Whitewater, Valley Center and Sedgwick. The truck was cold now and there was no possibility of sleep. There was nothing to lean against. The door handles felt as if it were mid-winter.

About ten miles north of Wichita they began to run into ground fog. There was none on the high spots. It settled into the low areas and hooded the fields and the bridges. Where rivers ran it conformed to the contours of the hills and gullies. The fog was hood deep, and as the International truck rolled along the headlights shone along its surface like two bestial eyes rising from the viscous abyss. When the wind moved,

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the sea rocked and quivered before the rolling blast. Signs and fences appeared transiently and flicked away into chimera before the eyes could specify size, number, texture. The truck seemed to float upon the fog; it seemed amphibian. It ground up the hills with the fog running off its sides, as if it were a ship that had just ducked into a wave and now mounted its crest. When it had crested, the truck whined down into the next valley and sailed out upon that milky sea, an International barge carrying two bestial souls into eternity.

Sky opened a window and trailed his hand through the fog as in a boat crossing into the night. He thought of the journey and suddenly he saw how Dirtbrown stared into the darkness, how the truck seemed to know its route, how the lowered heads of the bulls were that way in practice for the final lowering of the poll and the spit curls into a great bucket that would sort them into the proper grinder. Skyblue again saw the aftermath. The heads of fifty bulls in a large square pushcart in a packing plant. The heads had been skinned, flayed, but the eyes and horns and nostrils were still in place. And as the cart rattled along, the dead eyes, full of panic and bulging, twitched. They seemed liquid. The worker who pushed the cart was singing, "Take me in your arms before you take your love from me." Sky turned and stared at the driver. His face was dark and hard. His nose like a beak. He was tauropompos at the steering wheel and gear shaft.

When they arrived in Wichita, they parked and waited in line for an hour. It was 3:00 A.M. when they stopped before the shack at the scales. The shack had two blank windows and a solid door in the front. It was unpainted and black water leaked from the roof. An arm reached out of it and passed over a yellow ticket. By the door of the shack sat a steelblue collie, his white ruff stringy after the rain. The bricks of the loading yard glistened in the headlights, and figures with flashlights guided the truck to the unloading ramp for baloney bulls. The lights flicked and shafts of light shot into the air, like a miniature Hollywood première. In the back of the truck, the bulls thumped and banged as they tried to get a purchase on the wet, slick boards of the truck bed. When

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Dirtbrown unchained the two bulls, their heads rolled up and they looked fearfully about. Their eyes were bulbous and bald with excitement. The spittle ran in silken threads and whirled away into the night. They smelled panic and death.

The loading dock was wet with rain and manure and when the bulls came out of the truck they slid and fell into the pen for the baloney bulls. It was huge, about fifty feet by fifty feet. It was made of 12 × 12 posts and 2 × 12 planks and it was in a rumbling turmoil. It heaved and rocked like a stormy surf. There was a smashing, a bellowing and a general riot. Sky climbed up the side of the stockrack of the green truck and watched what the other men were watching. The pen was full of old bulls and they were all fighting furiously. Some of them had horns and all of them were bleeding. The men cheered them on. Only when a bull was about to be killed did the men squirt water on the attacker and drive him off. Skyblue watched the slice and grind for a moment and then got back into the truck. The seat was damp. The handles of the door cold. The truck smelled of urine and dung. There he closed his ears to that last venting of bull fury before the beasts succumbed to an ignominious immortality in a grade school sandwich.

After the unloading, he and Dirtbrown drove out onto the street and sat in the truck until dawn came on over the stockyards. When the light came, someone bought the bulls somewhere for ten cents a pound, ten cents a pound for those pits, scars, wounds, muscles, sinews, fury. Later a bluegreen check appeared in a windowed envelope while the bulls limped off to be ground up. When it was fully light, Dirtbrown and Skyblue took a walk over the stockyard pens on the catwalk provided for visitors to American industry.

The catwalk rose above the infinitude of blocks of square pens. Between the pens were aisles down which the condemned beasts ambled. As they moved along, gates were opened in front of them and then closed behind them. A flock of eight sheep meandered past; then came fifteen Poland China hogs; then ten Herefords with their spit-curled foreheads; then twenty Black Angus steers with their gasoline tank bodies and

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drumstick legs. Each group was preceded by a man on foot who opened the gates and each was followed by a man on foot who closed the gates. The driving power for the whole group came from the inevitable collie who stepped carefully around the ubiquitous shit.

The men who operated the gates received messages in some mysterious way and moved to one of the pens where the dreamy, cud-chewing beasts stood lost in the breathless euphoria of excessive fat. A gate was opened while the beasts gawked. There was no panic, no movement, most of the time. Then, as if to keep from falling when leaning in a certain direction, the whole group moved off and the gate was closed on the shiny and briny mangers of hay and the mélange of manure and straw. Quiet and empty, the pens seemed to have lost nothing by the exit of the animals. The pens conferred their own anonymity and invisibility on the animals as if obliterating them before the fact.

The whole scene was dominated by the quiet fascism of the steelblue collie. He was always immaculate as he moved gingerly *au-dessus de la mêlée*. His tail was white and shaped like a wilted question mark. His head made a z-pattern with his body. His neck was buried under a white ruff. His movements were awkward when he walked. His rump unmanageable and his legs stiff and cramped. But his function, to over-will, that he did in style. If an animal or animals got out of line, he panicked. His ears lay back, jaws extended, teeth bared. His eyes burned and his head twitched. Suddenly he was all movement as if frightened from his sleep. When he had the culprit pinned against a wall or a corner, he lowered his body, tail between his legs, stared at the beast across the blue steel of his nose and crept forward like a female lion on the hunt. He froze the calf, sheep, or whatever, and then willed the animal back into the mob. Then he relaxed, disdainful of those who objected to dying sheepishly. When he had them all back together again, the herd, the man and the dog moved off from gate to gate in a deliciously somber walk to the carnage. Everything fell back into the somnolent rhythms of the butcher.

When the men returned without the animals, they again

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sat silently on the fences. They hooked their heels onto the wooden slats and slumped over and hung their heads, again in dreamy insouciance. They smoked and waited for a word. They held their whips loosely between their legs. The skin of the whips was dry and the tips limp.

Above the pens, the odor of the stockyards congealed on the skin. It formed a scum along the arms and face. Inside the envelope of stinks, the mechanical actions went on. The cows and sheep chewed their cuds. The baloney bulls ground each other up. The collie watched. The keepers dozed. Steers still tried for a last minute copulation, mounting each other and hoping to touch something with their vestigial scrotums. Above the infinity of pens, the visitors walked in the sunlight and odor. Later all would cross the street to the Stockyards Hotel for a steak, rare and bleeding. In his chew and swallow, no one would think that he or she had become part of the glockenspiel Hades of the beasts.

But now Pursus was mounting another heifer and trying once more to learn to roller skate. He seemed to be trying to run, hop, shuffle and stand up all at once. He looked like a broad jumper beginning his run down the lane. He moved like a bowlegged bear. The heifer made no effort to help him organize his chopping, mincing pas de deux. She kept trying to run out from under him, all the while looking bug-eyed about as if looking for the skate key or the oil can. Pursus finally tired of his stumbling run and dropped back to all fours. He stood stiff and blowing, sucking wind, as if someone had kicked him in the belly and he couldn't catch his breath. He bellowed to the daylight moon and stuck out his black nose to find another prospect. The heifer ran to a corner of the corral. She was frightened and injured. Pursus pursued another. The herd began to run in circles. The corral spun into a turmoil, a maelstrom of spinning cows. A cloud of dust rose over the furor and all that could be seen at times was the head of Pursus with its bulging eyes and spit curls and spittle goatee straining *au-dessus de la mêlée*. The smashing and clattering beasts rocked the corral as the roaring circle broiled. It turned to a spinning rite in top time with the pneumatic

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bull-in-the-box head popping up and disappearing rhythmically.

Skyblue ran to the junk pile beside the barn. There from among the paper bag, the corset, the box, he took a large can and a broken ax handle. He ran to the corral and looked for the bull. He was still at it—and more furiously. Sky struck the can and he struck it again to drive the bull from his fit, to prevent the imminent bulge in his skyblue levis. He pounded for a diviner health, for a world of clear water, to fix quiet. But it came on like the Spring and the bull's head rode deliriously on the platter of dust, his fringed eye in a crypt of bull fire. Sky, bulging toward the base, leaned against the fence and the rough cloth of his levis spoke to him in spiny whispers.

Skyblue stood against the board fence and beat on the Crisco can, chipping off bits of blue. He felt cleaner now that he was on his feet and going into action. He thought to exorcise fire with the rattle of sticks on tins and he hammered for the purity of his senses. He hammered above the pop and bubble of his guts. He hammered until the battering of drums twitched out across the corral, past the barn, out into the empty sky with its rising moon, until the sound flicked out and scratched the mind and stuffed the heart, until dry men blown out among dogs and dung posed as stones. Skyblue stood and pounded until the battering of cans measured the pomp of the air.

Inside the house, Skyblue's sister, Grassgreen, drew the yellow curtains, stood before the big mirror in the bathroom and stroked her yellow breasts. In the window's lemon light she noted the pear-shape and the touches of red at the points—like two ripe strawberries in a bowl of butterscotch pudding. How they curved and bulged and tapered. She leaned over and her shadows rolled and rocked along the green walls, over the blue of the rug. She hunched and jerked them like marionettes, the merry wives in jig time. In the lemon light they hung like two great soughing violas lusting for the musician's fingers. She once more laid her hands on them and began the gentle caress to make them larger. She listened to the pounding scrap. She heard the bull's organic boomings. She

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measured her breasts with her eye; she heard Skyblue pounding among the hogs and dung.

The yellow shades filled with the green wind and bulged like the sails on Columbus' ships. They rolled out from the windows on the east wind's hump. Skyblue blinked in the shattered sun, in nature's twitching sidereal neon. The flick and click of sun blinded him to his vision. He saw only the blond sun and its blue dazzle. The great black bull was dead. A passing breeze suddenly sucked the curtains back against the steel frames of the library windows with the flat smack of a mother's kiss. His eyes dropped back to the page and Skyblue once more heard the tinkling glockenspiel of Elizabethan tragedy. He scanned once more the rinky-dink death of Horatio.

The Lights

These tall things don't need weeding.
But I can't get over the fireplace.
It's useless.
Except as an ashtray.

The lights stay on
and the windows remain wide open.

I am standing outside of us
in another building
or in the other room.

I am safely lodged inside the
vulnerable.
I am the music of the traffic outside
and I am your complete body.

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These states are unfallen
and into the ash
a window sticks its hand
to try out pieces of glass
the way a model
tries on style.

These stars too

and into the climate
winter burns a hole in the side of a hill.

The lights stay on
but the room fades out.

This is not noticed until later,
when the room returns,
harder,
more real than even the reality
of novels and films.

I drive my submission
like a beautiful icepick
into the bedspread of your life.

—JOHN PERREAULT
June 1966

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Leonard Michaels *(City Boy)* is a member of the English Department at the University of California at Davis. His work has been published in *Playboy* and *Audit*. *The Massachusetts Review* awarded their 1964 fiction prize to his story "Sticks and Stones," which was afterwards included in that year's O'Henry collection.

Dallas E. Wiebe *(Skyblue on the Dump)* published his first story in THE PARIS REVIEW #30. His poems and translations have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Minnesota Review*, *The Sixties* and other magazines. He teaches at the University of Cincinnati.

INTERVIEWS

Lawrence M. Bensky *(Interview with Harold Pinter)* has been a recent Paris editor of THE PARIS REVIEW. He is now with the staff of *The New York Times Book Review*.

William Flanagan *(Interview with Edward Albee)*, composer and critic, studied with Aaron Copland and David Diamond. He is working on an opera, *The Ice Age*, commissioned by the New York City Opera Company; the libretto is by Edward Albee. A book by him on American music is to be published in 1967.

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Michael Brownstein is a twenty-two-year-old poet living in New York City. His poems have appeared in *Mother.*

Tom Clark interviewed Allen Ginsberg in THE PARIS REVIEW #37. *The Sand Burg,* a collection of his poems, was published by Ferry Press in London in 1966.

Harry Fainlight has had poems in *"C"* and *Fuck You* in New York and *Listener* and *Encounter* in London, where his first book, *Sussicran,* was published by Turret Books in 1965. He is English and lives in London.

Lee Harwood was born in 1939 in Leicester, England, and now lives in London where he edits a little magazine called *Tzarad.* Two books of his poems have been published: *title illegible* in 1965, and *The man with blue eyes* in 1966.

Ron Padgett contributed a poem to THE PARIS REVIEW #35 and translations of Blaise Cendrars to THE PARIS REVIEW #37. He is working on a book with Ted Berrigan tentatively called *Bean Spasms;* it will be published in August by Kulchur Press. After a year in Paris, he is now living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, with his wife and son.

John Perreault was born in 1937 in New York City, where he now lives. An associate editor of *Art News* and editor of the little magazine *Elephant,* he had a book of poems, *Camouflage,* published by Lines Press in 1966.

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Diane di Prima is the editor of *Floating Bear* and the Poets' Press. Her work has appeared in many magazines, as well as in three books: *The New Handbook of Heaven, Dinners & Nightmares* and *Seven Love Poems from the Middle Latin.* She lives with her husband in Kerhonkson, New York.

David Shapiro has had poems in *Poetry* and *Art and Literature.* His book *January* was published by Holt in 1965. He was born in 1947 and is at present a student at Columbia University.

Sotere Torregian was born in 1941 and lives in Newark, New Jersey. He has contributed to *Art and Literature* and several New York magazines; a gallery in New York will publish a collection of his poems in the near future.

Tony Towle was awarded the poetry prize at Wagner College Writer's Conference in 1963, and received a Poet's Foundation award in 1964. His work has appeared in *Art and Literature, "C", Mother, Spice* and other magazines. A book of his poems will be published by Tibor de Nagy Editions, New York, in the spring of 1967.

James Wright's most recent volume of poems is *The Branch Will Not Break* (Wesleyan University Press 1963). **Robert Bly**, editor of *The Sixties*, will have a new book of poems, *The Light Around the Body*, published by Harpers this summer. The Sixties Press will bring out *Twenty Poems of Pablo Neruda*, on which the two poets collaborated.

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ART

Martial Raysse, born in Golfe-Juan, France, has lived and worked in Nice, Paris, New York and Los Angeles. He represented France last year at the Venice Biennale, where he won the David Bright prize for painters under forty-five. He has written the scenario for a movie, "Ulysses," which he plans to direct. His paintings and sculpture can be seen at the Alexander Iolas galleries in Paris and New York.

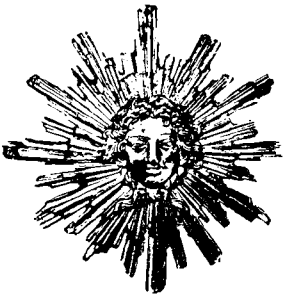
Colin Self was born in Norwich, England in 1941. He spent two years at the Slade School on a scholarship, and will have his first one-man show at the Robert Fraser Gallery in London.

BIOGRAPHY

F. W. Dupee is Professor of English at Columbia University. He is the author of *Henry James: a Biography* and *The King of the Cats*, a collection of essays.

George Stade teaches at Columbia University. He is the author of a forthcoming study of Robert Graves.

Nancy Mitford's THE SUN KING



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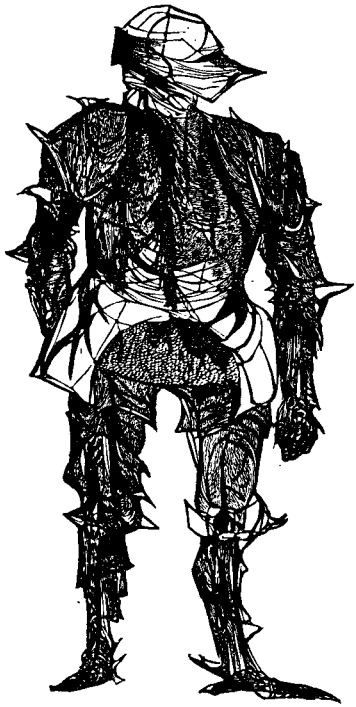

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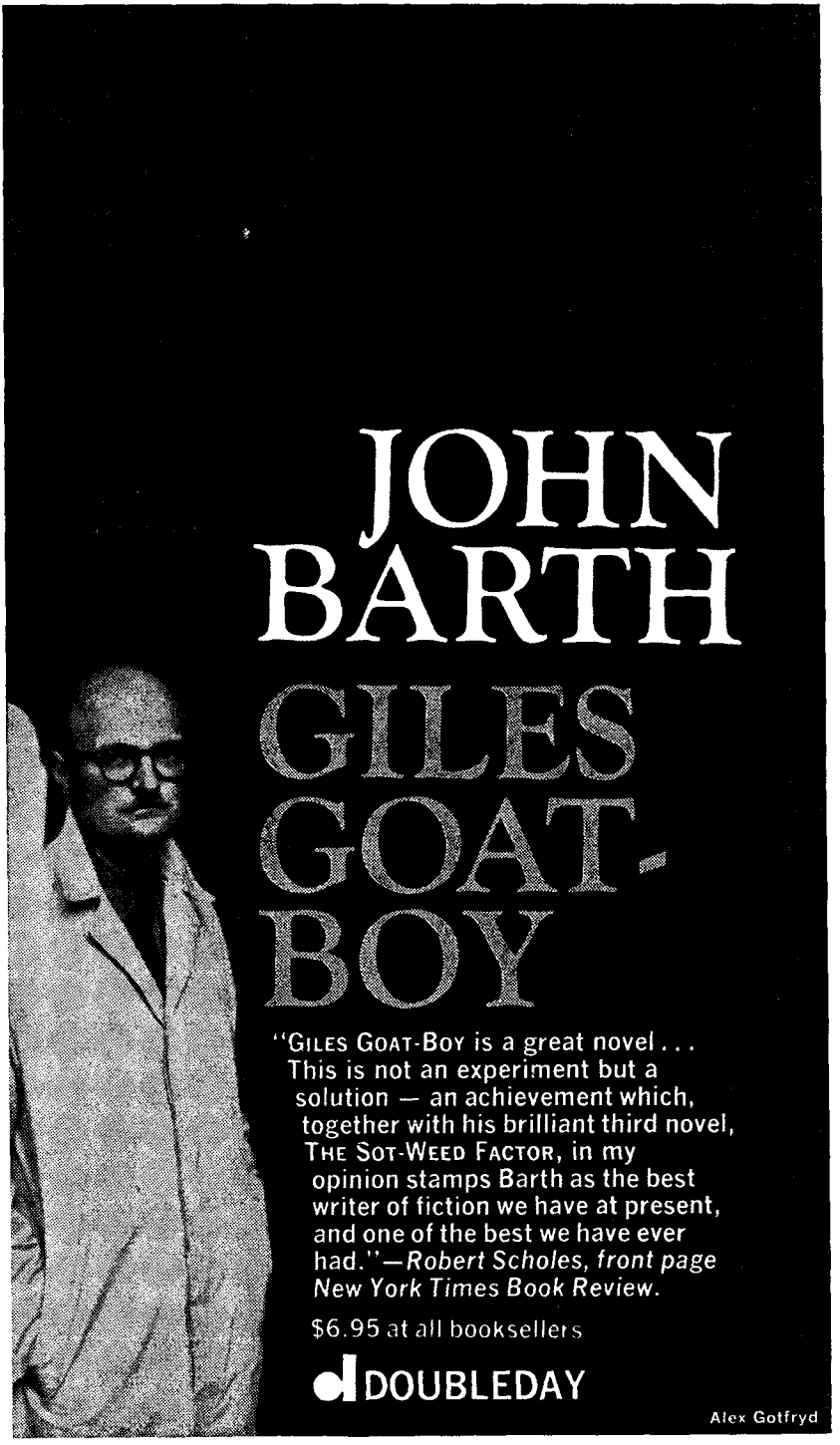
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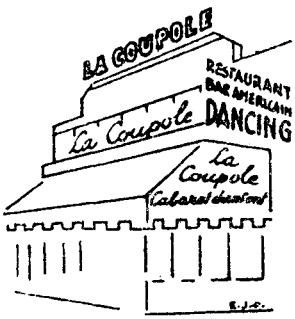

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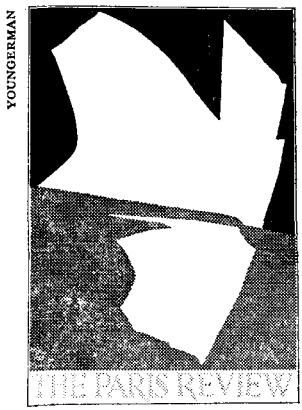

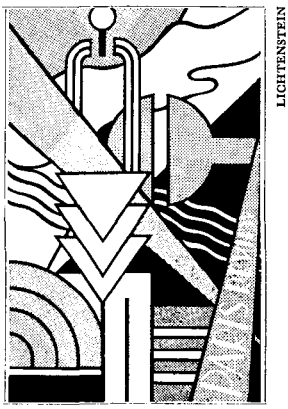

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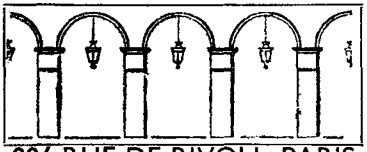

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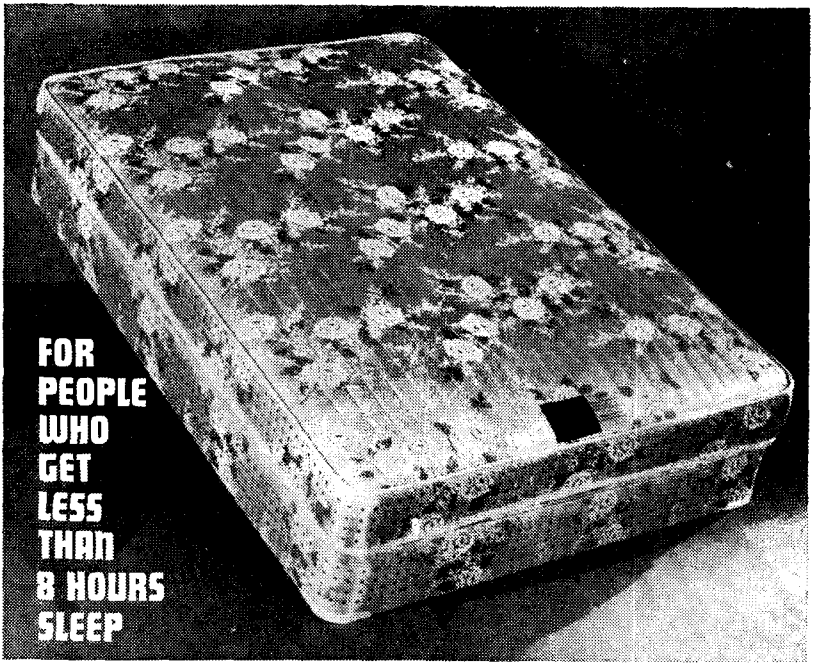

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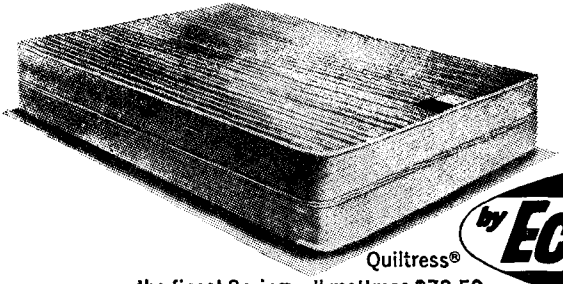

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